School of Theology at Claremont
1001 1364355



The Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AT CLAREMONT

WEST FOOTHILL AT COLLEGE AVENUE
CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA

BS
475
9813
v. 2

THE

ARGUMENTS

OF THE

BOOKS AND CHAPTERS

OF THE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT;

WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

WRITTEN ORIGINALLY IN FRENCH, BY THE

REV. MR. OSTERVALD,

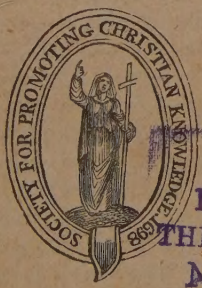
PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY, AND ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH, AT NEUFCHATEL IN SWITZERLAND;

And by him presented to *The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.*

TRANSLATED BY

JOHN CHAMBERLAYNE, ESQ.

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. II.



Library of
PITTSBURGH - XENIA
THEOLOGICAL SEMINA
N.S., Pittsburgh, Pa.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THE

SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE;

SOLD AT THE DEPOSITORY,

GREAT QUEEN STREET, LINCOLN'S-INN FIELDS.

AND 4, ROYAL EXCHANGE.

BS 474
O58
v.2
copy 1

Theology Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

THEOLOGY LIBRARY
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
CALIFORNIA

THE

BOOK OF PSALMS.

ARGUMENT.

The Book of Psalms is a collection of sacred Hymns, most of which were composed by King David. In this Book there are some Psalms of praise and adoration, which display the majesty, power, goodness, and other attributes of the Divine Being; others are songs of thanksgiving, blessing God for mercies vouchsafed, either to the Israelites in general, or to some particular persons; others again of the Psalms are prayers, in which David, or some other Prophet, the Author of them, implores the mercy of God, the pardon of sins, or deliverance from dangers and afflictions; some of the Psalms are historical, composed with a design to preserve the remembrance of the most considerable events which befel the Jewish nation. Lastly, Some of them are prophetical, presenting us with several predictions relating to our Lord Jesus Christ, and the times of the Gospel. It is evident from this view, that the reading and meditating on this divine Book may be attended with very great advantage; and therefore, that it ought to be of general and common use among Christians.

PSALM I.

In this first Psalm *David* represents the happiness of good men, and the miseries of the ungodly.

Reflections after reading the Psalm.

In this Psalm we are taught, I. That one mark of a good man is, that he shuns all intercourse with the wicked and ungodly; that he observes none of their false maxims, imitates none of their disorders; and that he makes his chief pleasure consist in meditating upon, and keeping the law of God. II. That the righteous are perfectly happy; that the Lord knows and blesses them, and makes them prosper. III. That the wicked will not escape his vengeance; and that, sooner or later, they will fall into the utmost miseries.

PSALM II.

I. In this Psalm *David* expresses his firm confidence, that the designs of his enemies, of the kings and people who opposed him, would be in vain; and that, notwithstanding their endeavours, God, who had anointed him king, would establish his kingdom. II. He exhorts them to submit to the will of God, and to serve him, lest they should expose themselves to his vengeance. This Psalm is prophetical, and relates to the kingdom of our Lord *Jesus Christ.*

Reflections.

The confidence which *David* manifests in this Psalm shows, in general, that attempts against the designs of God are vain: that what he has decreed will always come to pass; and that nothing can hurt those whom he loves, and has promised to bless. But the application which the Apostle makes to our Lord of these words, *Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee,* engages us more especially to consider this Psalm as it relates to the kingdom of *Jesus Christ,* the Son of God, which has been established in the world, in spite of all opposition from kings, and the great men of the earth, and will subsist for ever. And since this kingdom is established among us, and we have the happiness to be Christ's sub-

jects, let us submit ourselves to this glorious king; let us serve him with humility and joy; let us dread exposing ourselves to his wrath, and let us place all our trust and confidence in his favour and protection.

PSALM III.

THIS is a prayer that *David* made when he was persecuted by *Absalom* his son; in which he complains of the great number of his enemies, implores the divine assistance, and expresses his entire trust in the protection of the Almighty.

Reflections.

David's firm confidence in God, when pursued by his son *Absalom*, teaches us, that a man who fears God may be reduced to great extremities; but that whatever condition he is in, he is easy and full of trust; that he fears not men, having God on his side; that he rises up and lies down with confidence, and always depends upon the divine assistance, even in the greatest dangers.

PSALM IV.

I. *David* implores God's assistance against his enemies, and exhorts them to lay aside their designs, and submit to the will of God, who had appointed him king. II. He declares that he trusted in God alone, and that the assurance he had of his favour rendered him more happy than worldly men are in their greatest prosperity.

Reflections.

WE learn from this Psalm, I. That good men always apply to God in their distress. II. That the enterprises formed against those whom God favours are in vain, and without effect. III. That worldly men seek after nothing but the advantages of this life, but that the righteous aspire after the favour of God; that his favour is all their happiness, and all

their security: and fills their hearts with more joy, even under the greatest afflictions, than worldly men feel in their greatest plenty and prosperity.

PSALM V.

I. KING *David*, being afflicted and persecuted, prays the Lord to assist him; assuring himself that God, who hates cruel and deceitful men, would confound his cruel and unjust persecutors, and grant him the favour to go and worship him in his tabernacle. II. He prays God to guide and defend him from the snares and malice of the wicked, that he, and all righteous men, may have reason to praise him, and always to trust in his protection.

Reflections.

THESE four things are remarkable in this Psalm. I. The fervency and confidence with which good men call upon the Lord in their necessities. II. Their zeal for his service, and the joy and reverence with which they adore him, in places set apart for public worship. III. God's abhorrence and detestation of sin, and especially of pride and deceit; and the punishment reserved for the proud and unjust. And lastly, His favourable protection of all those that fear him and trust in him.

PSALM VI.

IN this prayer, *David*, being afflicted, represents the greatness of his sufferings, and intreats God not to punish him in his wrath; but to pardon his sins, and to deliver him. He makes this prayer with a firm assurance that God will hear him, and that his enemies should be confounded.

Reflections.

I. THE first words of this Psalm, *O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure*, express the humility of those, who with a

lively sense of their sins, and of the need they stand in of the divine assistance, implore God's mercy. When we use this prayer, we should do it, not only with a desire to be delivered from the evils and afflictions of this life, but chiefly in order to obtain pardon for our sins, and deliverance from the punishments of the life to come. *David's* expression of confidence in this Psalm, wherein he manifests his repentance and humiliation, proves, that, when we have recourse to God with humility and faith, we may be sure he will hear our request, and grant us that assistance we stand in need of, whatever dangers we may be exposed to.

PSALM VII.

I. *David* prays the Lord to defend him from his enemies, and calls him to witness his innocence. II. He assures himself that God will hear him, and turn the enterprises of his enemies against him to their own destruction, if they persisted in their designs.

Reflections.

In this Psalm we are taught to have recourse to God in our afflictions, as *David* had when he was persecuted by his enemies. But we are here likewise taught that, if we would have God hear us, there should be no iniquity found in us; that God searches the heart and the reins, and favours those who walk in sincerity and uprightness of heart. As for the ungodly, *David* declares in this Psalm, that their wickedness shall come to an end; that God lets them alone, and bears with them for a time; but that if they persist in their wickedness, he prepares for them the punishments they deserve, and will make the evil which they design for others fall upon their own heads. These are powerful motives to induce us to adore the justice of God; to improve by his forbearance and long-suffering; and to avoid every thing that may expose us to his vengeance.

PSALM VIII.

David celebrates the power and majesty of God, which so evidently appear in the works of the creation; and praises him in particular for creating man after his image, and giving him dominion over other creatures.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm engages our attention to the marks of God's infinite power, which we discover in the heavens, in the stars, and in the wonders we meet with by land and water. The use we ought to make of this meditation is to adore the majesty of the Lord, and from the due consideration of his greatness, and our own meanness, to say, *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that thou visitest him?* And since God has created us in his own image, enduing us with reason and understanding, that we may know and praise him, and has made other creatures subject to us, we ought gratefully to improve these advantages to his glory, and continually praise our Creator and Benefactor; saying, with *David, O Lord our governor, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!*

PSALM IX.

I. *David*, in this Psalm of thanksgiving for the victories he had obtained over his enemies, exhorts the righteous to join with him in praising the power, wisdom, and justice of the Lord, who delivers those that trust in him, and confounds the malice and devices of the wicked. II. He beseeches God to protect always those that fear him, against the violence of their enemies.

Reflections.

IN this Song *David* shows forth his piety, joy, and gratitude, on account of the victories he had gained by the divine assistance; which should likewise stir us up to praise God with all our heart, for the deliverances he grants us, and for all his favours to us. Not

content with praising him ourselves, we should, like *David*, publish abroad his kindness to us, and by that means engage others to join with us in blessing God, and in fearing him. Moreover, the Psalmist here teaches us, that God is, and ever will be, the king and judge of the world; that he will render to the wicked according to their works; that he searches out the wickedness of men; that all those who offend him shall perish; and that he will not suffer the wicked to prevail for ever. Lastly, *David* assures us, that those who fear the Lord may rely upon him: that he forgets not the cry of the humble in affliction: that he never forsakes those that seek him; and that the expectation of the righteous shall not be in vain. These are truths that we ought always to retain, as they tend very much to fill us with trust in God, and strongly engage us to depart from iniquity.

PSALM X.

I. THE prophet here describes the violence, cruelty, and artifices, which the wicked make use of against the innocent. II. He beseeches God to be the protector of the righteous, and hopes that his prayer will be heard.

Reflections.

THE complaints which the faithful makes in this Psalm, teach us not to be surprised if we see the righteous sometimes oppressed, and the wicked succeed in their unjust and cruel designs. We see here, that wicked men often employ both deceit and force to destroy the good; that God suffers innocence to be oppressed for a time; and that then the wicked think they have nothing to fear, and that God will not take notice of their sins. But this Psalm teaches us likewise, that God does not always suffer the proud and unjust to prevail, but takes vengeance on their crimes; and as for the meek and humble, that he beholds their afflictions, hears their cries, and never forsakes them.

PSALM XI.

David, being persecuted by his enemies, declared that he put his trust in the Lord; and that he was persuaded, God, who is a righteous judge, would support good men, and pour down his judgments upon the wicked.

Reflections.

I. This Psalm furnishes us with an example of the confidence which the righteous have in the Lord their God, who is their sure refuge, even when they are in the most deplorable condition, and know not what will become of them. II. King *David* teaches us, that God has his throne in the heavens; that he sees and knows both the good and the wicked; that his soul hates those that love unrighteousness; that he will cause the fire of his vengeance to fall upon them: and that, as he is perfectly just himself, he loves justice above all things, and always favours the upright.

PSALM XII.

I. In this, which is a Psalm of Prayer, *David* complains how few were upright and sincere, and that the people of his time were treacherous and full of mischief. II. He prays God that he would, according to his promises, protect the innocent, and restrain the injustice and violence of those who endeavoured to oppress them.

Reflections.

I. *David's* complaint of the small number of good people, in his time, and his prayer to God upon that occasion, teach us, that when we see iniquity abound, and how little there remains of honesty and sincerity among men, we ought to pray to God, that he would deliver us from the snares and malice of the wicked, and especially from imitating them. II. God promises, in this Psalm, that he will root out

all flattery and deceitful tongues, and that he will rise up to revenge afflicted innocence. This should teach us to avoid all deceit and injustice: and convince us, that, if we walk in uprightness, God will always be our protector and defender.

PSALM XIII.

David, in the bitterness of his soul, complains that God had forsaken him, and prays him to comfort him, and deliver him from his terrors; in the midst of which he is nevertheless encouraged by a holy confidence, which induces him to praise the Lord.

Reflections.

This Psalm is very proper for persons in affliction, and especially for those that labour under their sins, and are deprived of the sense of God's love. Such as are in this sad condition should not despair, but rather have recourse to God with confidence, implore his compassion, and beseech him to comfort them, and enlighten them with his grace, lest they sink under the load of their affliction; and, when God has delivered them, it is their duty to celebrate his mercy, and praise him for all his goodness.

PSALM XIV.

I. *David*, in this Psalm, describes the great and general corruption of the men of his age, their wickedness and impiety. II. He threatens the wicked with the judgments of God, and promises the righteous his assistance and deliverance.

Reflections.

David's description of the men of his time agrees, in many respects, with what we see among Christians; among whom so few seek God sincerely, and so many live as if they believed there was no God. Therefore we ought seriously to meditate upon what is said in this Psalm, that we may be preserved from such corrup-

tion; to which end we ought to consider, as *David* here teaches, that if the wickedness and depravation of men are great, God will take vengeance; and that in the worst of times there are always some faithful and righteous men that fear God, who partake of his love and protection.

PSALM XV.

In this Psalm, which is doctrinal, *David* teaches us who are worthy to serve God in his tabernacle, and to enjoy his presence, and by what marks they are distinguished.

Reflections.

This very instructive Psalm teaches us, that God will not admit all men into his presence, nor esteem them true members of his Church, but only those who walk in uprightness, who are faithful and sincere in their discourse and all their behaviour; who avoid slander, injustice, and extortion; who love good men, and religiously keep their promises and engagements. Such is the character of a virtuous man, and one that fears God, and such is the glorious recompence that is promised to him; and since none but these can enjoy the effects of God's love in this world, or the next, we ought to apply ourselves with great earnestness to all these duties, and live in innocence and integrity, and then shall we experience the truth of the promise made in this Psalm, *He that doth these things shall never be moved.*

PSALM XVI.

I. In this prayer, *David* intreats God to defend him, seeing he trusted in him; and declares, that he loved those that feared the Lord and abhorred idolatry. II. He seems, from a sense of the divine favour, to be full of joy, and testifies that he does not fear even death itself, and hopes to be for ever happy in communion with God.

Reflections.

We are here to observe the sentiments of the children of God, and their happiness. As to their sentiments, *David* teaches us, by his example, that they always trust in God; that they love and esteem the pious and virtuous; above all, that they avoid the company and errors of the wicked, and adhere inviolably to the pure service of God. As to their happiness, this Psalm teaches us that it is very great; that God himself is their portion and inheritance; that he is on their right hand, that they may never be moved; and that the sense of their happiness makes them rejoice and praise God continually; and that they are even convinced that God will not abandon them to the power of death. Lastly, though what has been said in this Psalm may suit *David*, and all the faithful, yet it is to be observed, that these words, *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption*, were completely fulfilled only in *Jesus Christ;* who, as *St. Peter* takes notice, *Acts* ii. being the Holy One of God, did not remain in the grave, nor see corruption; but was raised the third day, and exalted to heaven, where he reigneth over all things, and has prepared, for all true believers, joys that never shall expire.

PSALM XVII.

David, in his prayer, instructs the Lord to consider his innocence, to restrain the malice of his persecutors, and to defend the righteous from the violence of the wicked. He declares, moreover, that he did not seek for happiness in the things of this world, but sought it only in the divine presence and favour.

Reflections.

I. The confidence with which *David* calls upon the Lord in this Psalm, and his firm assurance that God, who knew the uprightness of his heart, would protect his innocence, show the great advantage of an

honest and sincere heart; since in all conditions good men can apply to God with assurance, knowing that God will always be their protector; *That he preserves them as the apple of his eye, and keeps them under the shadow of his wings.* II. On the other hand we here learn, that God knows the ways of the ungodly; and let their power be ever so great, he will not fail to restrain their wickedness and pride, and support the righteous. III. From *David* we learn, not to seek happiness in the things of the world, as carnal and worldly men are wont to do; and to pray to God to secure us from their malice; and, above all, to keep us from being like them; saying, with the prophet, *O Lord, deliver me by thy hand from the men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose bellies thou fillest with thy hid treasure.* Finally, The last words of this Psalm, *As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness;* should raise our thoughts to the desire and expectation of eternal happiness, which the righteous shall enjoy after the resurrection.

PSALM XVIII.

THIS is a Psalm of Thanksgiving, in which *David*, seeing himself delivered from his enemies, vows to love God, and to praise him for ever. In this Psalm he describes the great dangers he had been exposed to, his wonderful deliverances, and the victories he had gained over his enemies by the divine assistance; extolling the power, justice, and goodness, that God had shown in delivering him.

Reflections.

I. FROM the first words of this Song we learn, that the divine favours and deliverances should inspire us with the most tender and sincere affection, and lead us to praise God continually. II. *David's* account of the extreme dangers he had been exposed to, and the wonderful power of God displayed in his deliverance,

shows, that whatever extremities we fall into, we should never despair of God's assistance, if we fear him; that his power is greater than man's, and that he never wants means to deliver those who hope in him. III. When *David* says, that God had rewarded him according to his righteousness, it cannot mean, that he thought himself innocent before God; but he thus speaks, first, to signify that God had maintained the justice of his cause against *Saul*, and all those who had persecuted him unjustly, or would not own him for king; and secondly, to show that God had approved of his never forsaking the pure religion, and the worship of the pure God. The reflection we are to make on this particular, may be expressed in the words of *David: With the upright man, thou wilt show thyself upright; with the pure, thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward, thou wilt show thyself froward.* IV. We observe in this Psalm, the unhappy state of the wicked; since, as *David* says, when they are in distress, there is none to deliver them, and when they cry to the Lord, he will not hear them. The consideration of so melancholy a condition ought to be a powerful motive to deter us from sin. Lastly, *David's* zeal, expressed in the last verses of this Psalm, proves that it is not sufficient to praise God in private for his mercies, but that we ought to proclaim his praises and loving-kindness to the utmost of our power, that his holy name may be glorified by us, and by all men.

PSALM XIX.

THIS Psalm has two parts. In the first, *David* celebrates the glory of God, which appears in the order of nature, and particularly in the heavens and the sun. In the second, He speaks of the excellency of the law of God; prays God to pardon his sins, to keep him from offending him, and to sanctify his thoughts, his words, and all his behaviour.

Reflections.

KING *David* here mentions the two principal means by which God has made himself known to us, which are the works of nature, and his word. Let us therefore make a good use of both these means; meditating upon the marvellous works of God, which afford us such proofs of his power and wisdom; but particularly let us apply ourselves to the reading and meditating on his word. *David's* high encomiums on God's word inform us, that it is a sure, evident, and unerring rule of faith and practice; that it is of infinitely more value than the most excellent things of this world; that it was given to enlighten and sanctify us, to rejoice and comfort the heart; that the fear of the Lord procures perfect happiness to those who are possessed with it, and that there is great reward in the keeping of his holy commandments. To these reflections let us add our humble and hearty prayers to God, with *David*, that he would imprint these truths in our hearts; that he would pardon all our sins; that he would preserve us above all from the sins of presumption, and that he would so sanctify our thoughts, words, and actions, that they may be always acceptable in his sight.

PSALM XX.

THE people of *Israel* pray to God, that he would preserve King *David*, and make him victorious; and express their firm confidence that God will grant their requests.

Reflections.

IT appears from this Psalm, that the people are in duty bound to pray for kings and princes, whom God has set over them. That this is the duty of Christians, as it was of the *Jews*, appears from these words of St. *Paul*, wherein he exhorts, *That prayers and supplications be made for kings, and all that are in authority.* The *Israelites* beseech God, in this Psalm, to hear the

desires of their king, and to grant him the victory over his enemies. Christians, in like manner, should beg of God to support and defend their princes in just and necessary wars, and all their lawful undertakings; but the chief subject of their prayers should be, that they may lead a quiet, peaceable, and godly life under those who have the rule over them. Lastly, We here find, that the glory and security of kings and states depend on the divine favour and protection, to which they are accountable for all their victories and success; and therefore, that kings and their subjects ought to labour above all things to render God propitious.

PSALM XXI.

THE subject of this Psalm is the same as of the foregoing. Here the *Israelites* join with *David* in praising God for the victories he had vouchsafed him; and doubt not but he will continue his protection and assistance.

Reflections.

IN this Psalm we observe, I. That as it is the people's duty to pray for their kings, so ought they to rejoice when God blesses them and their lawful designs, and heartily thank him. II. That God loves, and in a very extraordinary manner defends, just and pious kings, who call upon him, and trust in him. III. That he brings low and destroys unrighteous princes, and especially such as oppose the establishment of his kingdom, and the designs of his providence.

PSALM XXII.

I. *David* complains that God had abandoned him to the violence of his afflictions, and to the fury of his enemies; he describes the wretched state he was reduced to, and beseeches God to come to his assistance. II. However, he expresses a firm confidence in God, and even praises him for the deliverance he expected from his goodness, and exhorts all the faithful to join

with him in praising the Lord. It must be observed that this Psalm is prophetical, and relates more especially to the sufferings and kingdom of the Messiah.

Reflections.

To improve by the reading of this Psalm, we must consider it as it relates to *David*, and as it refers to *Jesus Christ*. If we consider it in the first respect, we learn by *David's* complaints, that those whom God loves sometimes fall into so deplorable a condition, as to believe God has forsaken them. But the faith which *David* testifies in this Psalm, shows us likewise that we should never be discouraged under afflictions; because the Lord will deliver his children out of all their troubles, and give them cause to celebrate his goodness. II. This Psalm contains a very plain description of our Lord's sufferings and profound humiliation. Here we read those words which he uttered at his crucifixion, *My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Here we see how the *Jews* insulted him when he hung upon the cross, his hands and his feet pierced, his garments divided by lot, and the principal circumstances of his passion and death. God was pleased all these things should be foretold by *David*, that when they happened to our Lord, we might not be so much surprised, and might acknowledge him to be the Messiah. We should therefore deplore the blindness of the *Jews*, who are scandalized at the sufferings and cross of Christ, which ought rather to convince them that he is the Messiah whom God had promised. These considerations ought to strengthen our faith in Jesus the Saviour of the world; as this Psalm sets before us the glory to which God has exalted him after his sufferings, and which he now enjoys at the right hand of his Father, and his kingdom is established throughout all the earth.

PSALM XXIII.

David represents the Lord's paternal care of him, under the similitude of a shepherd, conducting, feed-

ing, and defending his sheep; and he describes the favours which he hoped always to enjoy in communion with God.

Reflections.

THE happy condition of the faithful, who live in full assurance of God's love, and under his protection, is here in a most affecting manner set before us. *David* shows, by his own example, that they never want; that God protects, comforts, and supports them in every condition; that he is with them even in death, and confers his graces and favours upon them in the highest degree, causing them to live in a blessed communion with him. This Psalm is full of consolation to true believers; and the desire of partaking in these precious advantages, should teach us all zealously to apply ourselves to the study of piety.

PSALM XXIV.

I. KING *David* acknowledges God to be the Creator of the world, and that he reigns over all things, and particularly over the Church. II. He shows who are the true members of the Church, and by what marks they are distinguished. Lastly, He celebrates the strength and glory of the Almighty King.

Reflections.

THIS Hymn contains two lessons of instruction. I. That God, who created the world in the beginning, is the Supreme and Almighty King, whose glory and power ought to be celebrated for ever. II. This Psalm teaches us who they are whom God looks upon as his children, and will admit into his glorious presence. None will be admitted there, but men of pure hands and a clean heart, who are sincere and faithful in their words and all their behaviour; who avoid fraud and deceit, and call upon the Lord, and seek his face with their whole heart. If, therefore, we desire to be partakers of God's love, we should examine whether we find in ourselves these characters and sentiments; endeavouring to produce

them in ourselves, if we have them not; and if we have, improving them continually.

PSALM XXV.

In this Psalm *David* implores the favour of God with great fervency of devotion; beseeches him, above all things, to teach him to walk in his ways and to fear him, to pardon his sins, and to deliver him from his afflictions. He here, likewise, gives us a beautiful description of true piety, and of the happiness it procures. In this Psalm there are many very excellent instructions, and exalted strains of devotion.

Reflections.

The use we are to make of this Psalm is, to take particular notice, I. With what confidence they who trust in God apply to him, and implore his assistance in all their necessities. II. That what we ought most earnestly to pray for is, that we may be filled with the knowledge of God; that he would teach us to walk in his way, and grant us pardon for all the sins we have committed. III. We here learn, how valuable it is to fear God, and the advantages it procures us. King *David* has told us, that God makes known his ways to the meek and humble; that he shows them that fear him the way that they should choose; that to them he reveals his secrets and his covenant; that he blesses them and their posterity exceedingly; and when they are in affliction, he protects them, and delivers them out of all their distress. These are instructions of the greatest use and importance; and carefully reading and meditating on these things, and frequently offering up to God the excellent prayers contained in this Psalm, is one of the best things we can do to strengthen us more and more in the fear of the Lord, and secure our eternal welfare.

PSALM XXVI.

David prays the Lord to support his innocence; he says, he always avoided the company of the wicked;

and that his greatest pleasure was, to serve God in his tabernacle; and with these dispositions, he hopes that God will not give him up to his enemies.

Reflections.

I. The first instruction this Psalm furnishes us with is, that God chiefly regards our integrity and sincerity; that he searches and tries the heart; and therefore, that the only means of obtaining God's favour, is to approve ourselves in his sight, to live in innocency, to walk in truth, and to hate vice, and the company of the wicked. II. *David's* earnest desire to serve God in the tabernacle, should stir us up to discharge the duties of religion with the same fervency, and to take the greatest delight in going to the house of God, there to praise him, and to meditate on the wonders of his love. But the care this pious king took to purify himself before he went into the altar of God, should convince us, that in order to appear in the presence of God, we should be pure and live a holy life. Lastly, We should join with *David* in the prayer which he offers up to God at the end of this Psalm, and beseech him to preserve us from being like the wicked, lest we share with them in the punishments that are prepared for them.

PSALM XXVII.

I. King *David* testifies his entire confidence in God in the greatest dangers; his zeal and firm adherence to the true worship of the Supreme Being. II. He begs of God to grant him tokens of his favour, and seems fully persuaded that God would never forsake him. In this Psalm there are many noble strains of devotion, faith, and piety.

Reflections.

In this Psalm we are to remark, I. That those who fear God and trust in him, are never afraid of men; but are calm and unshaken, even when persecuted and reduced to the most deplorable condition.

II. That the most inestimable advantage, and the greatest consolation we can enjoy in this world is, to meet often in the house of God, there to praise and adore him, and to receive the testimonies of his favour. III. That when God does incline our hearts to seek his face, we should improve the mercy, and not slight the gracious invitation. Lastly, *David's* assurance shows, that should we be forsaken by all the world, yet God will never forsake us, if we fear him and depend upon him; that nothing but our trust in him, and hope in his promises, can support us in the midst of the troubles of this life; and that the expectation of those who seek their happiness in God alone, should never be in vain.

PSALM XXVIII.

KING *David* prays God to defend him from the malice and artifice of his enemies, and from the judgments that should fall upon them. He praises him likewise for the care he took of him, trusts in his assistance, and prays for the prosperity of the *Israelites.*

Reflections.

WHAT we are to gather from this Psalm is, I. In all our wants to call upon the Lord, lifting up our hands and hearts to him, to implore his assistance, beseeching him not to suffer us to be exposed to the miseries of the ungodly. II. That God renders to the wicked according to their works; and particularly destroys the double-minded and deceitful men, who speak peace to their neighbours, while their hearts are full of rancour and hatred. III. That what brings men to misery and destruction is their not taking heed to the works of the Lord, that they may learn from thence to fear him. IV. The praises which *David* adds to his prayers, show that good men call upon the Lord, entirely relying upon his goodness; that God hears those who call upon him, and will always be the shield and strength of the righteous, and the protector of his people.

PSALM XXIX.

THIS is an exhortation to acknowledge the majesty of God, as it appears in all his works; and particularly in thunder and lightning. The prophet speaks likewise of the protection which God vouchsafed to his people *Israel*.

Reflections.

THE reading of this Psalm engages us to adore with reverence and fear the majesty of God, which he gives so many proofs of in his works. This Psalm teaches us in particular, that God by his power produces the thunder which is heard in the air, and its surprising effects; that he presides over all such events, and that his providence makes use of them to exercise his judgments, and to make known his greatness to mankind. Thus should we take occasion from the works of nature to fear God, and to put our whole trust in him, remembering that he is the Lord and judge of the world, and exerts his power to punish those who offend him, as he employs it at other times for the good of his people and of all his children.

PSALM XXX.

IN this Psalm, *David* returns solemn thanks to God that he had delivered him, and made his wrath give way to his mercy. He acknowledges that he had in prosperity forgot himself, and therefore God had chastened him, to bring him again to a sense of his duty, and to induce him to call upon him with greater fervency; and he vows he will praise God for ever, because he had heard him. It is thought this Psalm relates to what *David* did when he returned to *Jerusalem* after the conspiracy of *Absalom*, to purge his house which had been defiled by that unnatural son.

Reflections.

THIS religious song of thanksgiving is particularly adapted to persons that have escaped some great dan-

ger. Those whom God has thus delivered, ought, in imitation of *David*, to celebrate his goodness, and to invite all men to celebrate it with them; acknowledging that *his anger endureth but a moment, and that in his favour is life.* But above all, we ought to take notice of the instructions here given us concerning the usefulness of affliction. *David* observes, *That when he was in prosperity, he said, he should never be moved; but as soon as God had hid his face, he was troubled;* and that he cried to the Lord and was heard by him. Let this convince us of the use and necessity of afflictions. Even the best of men sometimes forget themselves in prosperity; but God makes use of adversity to inspire them with a holy fear, to bring them to a sense of their duty, and to oblige them to have recourse to him; and then he is reconciled and hears their cry, changing their sorrow into joy, and their complaints into songs of praise. This is a doctrine of general use, and deserves our most serious meditation, that if God grants us rest, we may not abuse it; and if he sends us adversity, it may serve to humble us, and draw us more effectually unto him.

PSALM XXXI.

KING *David* prays God, that as he trusted in him, he would be pleased to defend him against the evils he endured from his enemies, and even from his nearest friends; and being persuaded that his prayer should be heard, he rejoices in the deliverance which he expected from the goodness of the Lord.

Reflections.

I. THE confidence which *David* in this Psalm seems to be inspired with, and the prayers which he here addresses to his Almighty Protector, show, that the children of God, full of confidence in the divine goodness, draw nigh to him in all their wants, and are never disappointed in their hopes. Let us imitate *David* in his piety and confidence in God, re-

commend ourselves continually to his protection, and always have this prayer in our hearts, *Into thy hand I commit my spirit; for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord thou God of truth.* II. The evils and persecutions which *David* suffered, even from his nearest relations, and the manner in which he submitted to these severe trials, prove, that if we are exposed to sufferings, we ought to bear them patiently, without entertaining any malice or hatred in our hearts against those who injure us, not resenting the evils they do us, but waiting with resignation for the divine assistance. Observe, lastly, in this Psalm, how *David* is transported with sense of God's favour towards those that fear him, and of the greatness of those good things he lays up in store for them. Let all that fear God consider this for their comfort; and let this consideration encourage them more and more to obey and please him. The exhortation which concludes this hymn, naturally tends to produce this effect; *O love the Lord, all ye saints, for the Lord preserves the faithful; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.*

PSALM XXXII.

I. This doctrinal Psalm teaches us, that man's true happiness consists in the pardon of his sins, and in the purity of his conscience; and that this favour is obtained by a sincere confession of sin, and by truly returning to God. II. *David* exhorts men to make a good use of this doctrine, and to take heed not to harden their hearts; threatening the wicked with the greatest miseries, and promising complete happiness to the righteous.

Reflections.

I. We must make the same reflection upon the first words of this Psalm, as St. *Paul* does in the fourth chapter of the epistle to the *Romans;* which is, that the happiness of man, and his justification before God, consist in the pardon of sins, in peace

of conscience, and a sense of God's mercy. II. King *David* teaches us, that if we desire to attain this happy condition, we must have a clean heart, and a pure conscience; that the remission of sins is the effect of God's mercy; that in order to obtain it, we must sincerely confess and forsake our sins, which, as soon as we confess and forsake them, are blotted out, and God restores us to a sense of his grace and favour. III. It appears from this Psalm, that a true penitent, when he has received pardon for sins, does not only praise God for his own happiness, but endeavours, as much as in him lies, to bring other men to repentance and conversion. This is the direct tendency of these exhortations and instructions we read at the end of this Psalm, wherein *David* warns us not to harden our hearts, as sinners do; and assures us, *That many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall encompass him about; and that those who are righteous, shall rejoice and be glad in the Lord; and all that are upright of heart shall shout for joy.*

PSALM XXXIII.

1. *David* exhorts the righteous to praise God with heart and voice, from the consideration of his goodness, righteousness, and power, which appear in the works of creation and providence. II. He represents God, as seeing all things, examining the actions of men, and displaying his mercy towards those that fear him, and trust in him.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm engages us to make these five reflections. I. That it is a duty highly reasonable as well as delightful to praise God: but that none but upright men can discharge it in a becoming manner; and that the praise of God is only proper in their mouths. II. That we ought to praise God, because he has created the world by his almighty power, and because he governs it wisely and justly by his providence.

III. That if it was a great advantage to the *Israelites*, to be the people whom God had chosen for his inheritance, and who were in a peculiar manner protected by him; the favour which God has vouchsafed us, in admitting us into his church, and entering into covenant with us, is a still more glorious privilege. IV. That God has a perfect knowledge of all that passes in the world, and in particular that he sees all the actions and thoughts of men, which is expressed in these words, *The Lord looketh from heaven, he beholdeth all the sons of men; from the place of his habitation, he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth, and considereth all their works.* This thought should continually possess our souls, that the consideration of the presence of God, and of his infinite knowledge, may engage us to walk before him in holiness and righteousness. Lastly, Since *David* has told us, *That the eyes of the Lord are upon those that fear him, and upon them that hope in his mercy;* let us observe from thence, that the true way to have God our friend is to trust in him, to fear him, without ceasing to apply to him for mercy; and to this end, to pray continually in the words of the prophet, *Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.*

PSALM XXXIV.

I. In this Psalm of thanksgiving, which is likewise doctrinal, *David* praises God for delivering him, when he was discovered by the *Philistines* in the city of *Gath.* II. He represents God's care and protection of his children, the advantages which the fear of God procures them, and the fatal lot of the wicked. The whole is expressed in this Psalm with particular strength and beauty.

Reflections.

This Psalm is deservedly esteemed one of the noblest and most edifying. King *David* here informs us by his instructions and example, I. That when

God grants us any deliverance, or any other favour, we ought to express our gratitude, not only by our own thankfulness, but by inviting others likewise to praise him with us. II. That the Lord never fails to hear and deliver the righteous who call upon him in their distress, and employs even angels for their defence. III. *David* in this Psalm seems thoroughly affected with a sense of God's goodness, and the happiness which those experience who are partakers of his love; and describes, in a beautiful manner, the nature of piety, exhorting the saints to live always in the fear of the Lord, to be sincere in their words and actions, to fly from evil, do good, and seek peace. Lastly, The Psalmist sets before us, the inestimable benefits and advantages of holiness, since they that fear the Lord can lack nothing; his eyes being always over the righteous, his ears open to their cries, and if they are exposed to many misfortunes, he delivers them from them all at the last; whereas he sets his face against the wicked for their destruction. Nothing can be of greater use, than continually to call to mind these divine and excellent lessons, to have them continually before our eyes and in our hearts; to which end we must frequently read this admirable Psalm, and make a constant use of it for our edification and comfort.

PSALM XXXV.

David implores the divine assistance against his enemies, whose malice, injustice, ingratitude, and cruelty, he describes. He mentions his own innocence, and the manner in which he behaved himself towards them: he threatens their ruin; and blesses God beforehand for the deliverance he expected from his power and goodness.

Reflections.

We may collect in general from this Psalm, that God defends good men; that the wicked, and such as persecute the faithful, are exposed to his vengeance;

and that it is the duty of the righteous to rejoice in God, when his glory is promoted by their deliverance. But we must not conclude from what *David* says here, against his enemies, that we are allowed to wish evil to those who injure us, or rejoice when any evil happens to them. We are to remember, that the enemies of *David* were enemies to God himself; and that *David*, as a prophet, and one who had an express promise of the divine assistance, might denounce destruction against those who opposed him. However, in reality, he was so far from wishing them any evil, that he was even afflicted at the evil which did befall them, as he himself testifies in this Psalm, wherein he declares he had behaved towards them as if they had been his friends and his brethren. These sentiments suit still better with Christians, who know that the Laws of the Gospel oblige them to love all men, even those who hate them, to do them good, and pray for them, in conformity to the precepts and examples of our Saviour *Jesus Christ.*

PSALM XXXVI.

David does two things in this Psalm, I. He describes the impiety and malice of the wicked. II. He celebrates the goodness of God towards his creatures in general, and particularly the excellence of those good things he bestows upon them that fear him.

Reflections.

I. In this Psalm we have a description of the sentiments and behaviour of the wicked and ungodly, who have no fear of God before their eyes, but flatter themselves, and are confirmed more and more in their wickedness, and without any dread of evil seek only to hurt others. II. *David* here observes, that the righteous have very different sentiments; that they adore the power and justice of God, manifested in his works and all his judgments; but they are transported with the consideration of his immense goodness, and the favours he

bestows on those who love him and put their trust in him. The reading of this Psalm teaches us to avoid all impiety, and to cleave stedfastly to God by a sincere love and holy fear, that we may rejoice in him with righteousness, and say with *David, O God, how precious is thy goodness! the children of men hide themselves under the shadow of thy wings. We shall be satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt give us drink of the rivers of thy pleasures.*

PSALM XXXVII.

THE design of this instructive Psalm is, to show that we should not be surprised if the wicked are sometimes happy in this life, and if good men are in afflictions. *David* proves, that sooner or later God fails not to deliver good men, and to reward their piety, and to make wicked men feel the effects of his wrath. This Psalm contains admirable instructions, and such as are very powerful to engage us to fear God, and to turn us away from evil; wherefore we ought to read and meditate upon it with great attention.

Reflections.

THE sum of the doctrine contained in this Psalm is, that we ought not to envy the happiness which the wicked enjoy in this world, nor be offended at the afflictions of good men. We are to observe here, that injustice, hatred, and malice against the righteous, self-conceit, pride, violence, and impiety, make up the character of the wicked; that, on the contrary, good men trust in the Lord, and are continually doing good, place their whole happiness in him, are always quiet, meek, and humble, love to give, and to exercise charity, and their discourse is full of wisdom and edification. *David* assures us that such men are blessed and protected of God; that true happiness is their lot; that the divine favour extends to them and their posterity; that if they are sometimes in affliction, in their trials they experience the divine assistance, and have a happy

issue out of all their troubles. It is not so with the ungodly; their prosperity is only imaginary, and of short duration; God confounds their unjust designs, and his anger, in a very sensible manner, falls upon them, and all that belongs to them. Every day's experience verifies what this Psalm teaches; and therefore the effect which the reading of it should produce, is, to convince us, that our whole happiness depends on our perseverance in piety, which is attended with such sure and glorious rewards.

PSALM XXXVIII.

In this devout prayer *David* beseeches the Lord not to correct him in his anger. He complains of the punishments he suffered for his sins, and of his being forsaken by his friends, and persecuted by his enemies, and gives proofs of his humility, piety, and trust in God.

Reflections.

This Psalm offers to our consideration these four things: I. It represents to us the sentiments of a penitent sinner, humbled under the load of his sins, and a sense of the divine displeasure: these sentiments are expressed in this prayer; *O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath, nor chasten me in thy hot displeasure.* II. What is said in this Psalm is very proper for the instruction and consolation of those who are afflicted with pains and diseases, or in any other manner: *David* teaches them by his own example to look upon the evils that befall them, how severe soever they be, as a just correction for their sins, and to ask God pardon for them. III. If they suffer by the malice and injustice of men, they should imitate *David* in his humility, patience, and meekness, and wait with resignation till God, who never forsakes the innocent, is pleased to deliver them. IV. We learn from *David's* complaints of the cruelty and injustice of his enemies, that those who afflict the innocent, rejoice in other men's mis-

fortunes, and return evil for good, shall not escape the just judgment of God.

PSALM XXXIX.

I. *David* declares in this Psalm, that he had made a firm resolution not to murmur at the prosperity of the wicked, nor his own sufferings. II. He observes, that he had overcome this temptation by considering the shortness of this life, and the vanity of the good things of this world. III. He beseeches God to pardon his sins, and deliver him from his afflictions, and humbly submits to the chastisements that God had sent him.

Reflections.

I. This Psalm contains an excellent doctrine; which is, that the way never to fall into murmuring, nor to suffer ourselves to be tempted or offended when we see the temporal prosperity of the wicked, is, to represent to ourselves the shortness of our lives, the insignificancy of the good things of this world, and the vanity of men's labours for earthly things. II. *David* teaches us, that God can put an end to our lives when he pleases, and deprive us of all our advantages; that we are only strangers and sojourners here below; and that the only remedy for the miseries and vanity of human life is, to put all our hope in the Lord, to ask his assistance, and pardon of our sins, and to submit with resignation to his holy will; saying, when he afflicts us, *I became dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.* With such thoughts as these, we are sure to be easy and happy; we may rely upon God, and praise him, and rejoice in him, both in prosperity and adversity.

PSALM XL.

I. The prophet *David* praises God for the deliverances and favours he had received from his goodness, devotes himself to his service, and acknowledges, that

by submission to the will of God, rather than by sacrifices, he hoped to be accepted. II. He makes a vow to praise God in the most public manner, and beseeches him to assist him in his afflictions and dangers; and, above all, to deliver him from his sins.

Reflections.

This Psalm contains extraordinary strains of piety and gratitude. We here observe the sentiments of a heart full of confidence, and affected with a lively sense of God's mercies, with a profound humility, and an ardent desire to be entirely devoted to him. Therefore the instructions we here meet with are these: I. That in our afflictions we ought to wait patiently for the Lord, who, though he delay for a time, will come at last to the assistance of those that hope in him. II. That the true happiness of man consists in choosing the Lord for his refuge, without seeking for it in men, or in the things of the world. III. That the mercies of God towards us are so many in number, that we cannot reckon them, nor celebrate them as they deserve. IV. That what God chiefly requires of us is, that we should submit ourselves to him without reserve; saying, *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God; thy law is within my heart:* and that we should publish his praises and his truth before all the world. We see in this Psalm, that this is the only service that is pleasing to God; and that when we are in this condition, we may call upon him with a full assurance of his assistance. Lastly, We must consider that *David* speaks in this Psalm, as the type of *Jesus Christ,* when he says, *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, but mine ears hast thou opened. Then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God.* St. *Paul* applies these words to our Lord in the Epistle to the *Hebrews,* and remarks, that by *Jesus Christ's* oblation and sacrifice of himself, we are sanctified and dedicated to God. This affords a powerful motive to celebrate the infinite love of our Redeemer, to devote ourselves to the Lord, and conform in all things to his will.

PSALM XLI.

David promises particular blessings to those who behave themselves charitably towards the afflicted, and complains of the cruelty of his enemies, and even of his friends, who, instead of compassionating his miseries, wished for his death, and said, that God punished him for his sins.

Reflections.

In this Psalm, the blessing of God is promised to those who have compassion on the afflicted, who judge charitably of them, and comfort them in their sufferings. *David* assures the kind and charitable, that God will deliver them in their calamities, that he will heal them when they are sick and languishing, and that he will preserve them, and make them happy in this life. These promises ought to inspire us with sentiments of charity and compassion for the unfortunate, and engage us to comfort them, and contribute to their ease as far as we are able. On the other hand, what *David* says of the proceedings of his enemies, shows us that it is a great sin to insult the miserable, to wish evil, or to desire the death of any one, and to judge that all those whom God afflicts are punished because of their sins. This should teach us to avoid hard-heartedness and rash judgments, and to think always favourably of people in affliction, and especially of those who are remarkable for piety, and the fear of the Lord.

PSALM XLII.

The prophet expresses, with great strength and energy, his unfeigned sorrow to see himself banished from the house of God, by the persecution of his enemies, and his hearty desire to return to it again, that he might serve God among the faithful; he likewise describes his alarms, and the conflict he had within himself, which he had overcome by confidence in the divine assistance.

Reflections.

In the earnest desire of the prophetic author of this Psalm, who was probably *David*, to come again to the house of God, which he was kept from, we see what sentiments true devotion and sincere piety inspire men with. The faithful desire nothing more sincerely, than to appear before God, and particularly to worship in the assemblies of the saints, and to be edified by the company and good examples of godly men. In like manner, there is nothing grieves them more than to be deprived of that comfort, and to see the wicked impiously insult God, and scoff at the just man's trust in him. Observe next, that the author of this Psalm had been in exceeding great distress, and as it were sinking under the afflicting hand of God; in which condition his soul was distracted, and almost destitute of comfort; but that, nevertheless, his faith had raised and comforted him. This example ought to strengthen the righteous in their afflictions, comfort them in their greatest bitterness of soul, and make them say with *David*, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

PSALM XLIII.

In this Psalm, as well as the foregoing, the Psalmist, persecuted and driven from the tabernacle, begs God to deliver him from his enemies, and restore him the valuable blessing of serving and praising God in public, and comforts himself with the prospect of his assistance.

Reflections.

The reading of this Psalm shows, that if the prophet begged of God to deliver him from the malice of his enemies, it was chiefly with a view to return to the tabernacle, that he might praise God, and ex-

press his joy, love, and gratitude. This the children of God desire above all things, and this it is that supports and comforts them most effectually in all their trials and afflictions. Lastly, the complaints and sighs of the prophet, in this and the foregoing Psalms, because he could not come into the house of God, should engage those who have the liberty to serve God in the religious assemblies, gladly to improve so inestimable a blessing.

PSALM XLIV.

THIS Psalm was composed at a time when the people of *Israel* were under affliction and persecution. The prophet here makes mention of the wonders God had wrought in bringing their forefathers into the land of *Canaan*, from whence he hopes that God would again display his power in behalf of the afflicted *Israelites*, and deliver them. He describes the sad condition they were in at that time, and the severe persecutions to which they were exposed.

Reflections.

I. THE *Israelites* in their afflictions call to remembrance the many signal blessings which God had formerly conferred upon that nation. Thus should we, in our afflictions, comfort ourselves with the consideration of the goodness of the Lord, and the evident proofs he has in all ages given of his power and mercy. II. As the *Jews* acknowledged that their fathers had become masters of the land of *Canaan*, not by their own strength, but by the power of God; we should likewise give God the glory of all the privileges and blessings we enjoy, and confess that his favour is the happiness and security of nations, and particularly of the Church. III. The complaints the *Jews* make of their deplorable condition, show, that in all times the Church has been afflicted; and that God often permits his people to be delivered into the hands of the wicked, and the faithful to be cruelly persecuted. This is *St. Paul's* reflection, in the eighth chapter

of the Epistle to the *Romans*, where he applies to Christians these words of this Psalm; *For thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.* God permits it so to be for the glory of his name, and to try and purify his church. Lastly, We see here, that the faithful, though God afflicts them, do not forget him, nor forsake his covenant; and therefore he is always ready to come to their assistance, and to hear them when they call upon him in time of need.

PSALM XLV.

THIS Psalm is a nuptial song upon the marriage of king *Solomon*, and contains a description of the glory of that prince and his consort; it is likewise a prophetical Psalm, and relates to our Lord *Jesus Christ.*

Reflections.

THIS Psalm is to be considered in two lights, I. As a hymn designed to procure the divine blessing upon the marriage of *Solomon*, and upon his kingdom. II. As it properly relates to *Jesus Christ*, the husband and king of the Church. In this Psalm there is express mention made of his divinity, of his anointing, of his power, of the glory and duration of his kingdom. This *St. Paul* teaches us in the first chapter of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, where he applies to our Lord the words of this Psalm: *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom: God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.* These words can properly suit no other but *Christ Jesus;* and as they describe his infinite power and glory, they engage us to reverence and adore him, and in all things to submit to him, that we may share in the blessings he pours upon his Church, and upon all those who have the happiness to live under his dominion.

PSALM XLVI.

THIS is a Psalm of thanksgiving, for the assistance God had granted his people, at a time when they had been attacked by several nations.

Reflections.

WE are to learn from hence, that God is the protector of his Church, and that even when kings and nations, who are represented in this Psalm by floods and torrents, are confederate against it, God renders all their efforts vain, and powerfully delivers it. The Christian Church has still greater share in these promises and the divine protection than the ancient people had, since this is for ever to subsist. This the Church has always experienced; this the faithful should consider for their comfort, and the confirmation of their faith.

PSALM XLVII.

THE prophet exhorts all the inhabitants of the earth to praise God, to adore his majesty and power, and acknowledge that the Lord, who had made a covenant with the children of *Israel*, was the king of the world, and that all the people ought to submit themselves to him.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm should excite us to praise God, and to celebrate his glory with holy transports, as he is the king of the whole earth, and deserves the adoration of all men; but above all, because he has chosen us to be his people and his inheritance. What we read in this Psalm is particularly applicable to the times of the Gospel, and especially to our Lord's triumphant ascension to the glory of his kingdom, and to the happiness which the several nations of the earth now enjoy in being accounted the people of God.

PSALM XLVIII.

In this Psalm, which was composed upon occasion of some deliverance that God had granted the city of *Jerusalem*, the prophet praises God for defeating the counsels and attempts of the kings who had assaulted that city; and he describes the strength of *Jerusalem*, and God's protection of his people.

Reflections.

The reflection we are to make upon this Psalm is, that the Church has often been attacked by the kings and nations of the world, who had conspired together to destroy it; but that God has always watched over it, and rendered all the conspiracies of its enemies vain, and turned them to their own confusion. This Psalm assures us very expressly, that the Church is the dearest thing to God upon earth; that he dwells in the midst of it; that he encompasses it with his protection; and that he will always support it. These promises are still better suited to the Christian than to the *Jewish* Church, and ought to convince us of our happiness, in being members of Christ's Church, and fill all sincere Christians with stedfast hope and confidence in God.

PSALM XLIX.

In this Psalm, which is doctrinal and instructive, the prophet proves, by several considerations, that the happiness of man does not consist in the riches and honours of the world; that those who place their glory and their happiness in them, are fools and madmen; and therefore, that we ought not to set our hearts upon these things, neither fearing nor envying such as possess them; but that we should put our trust in God alone, who can render happy, even after death, those who fear him, and put their whole trust in him.

Reflections.

There are many very important reflections to be

made on this Psalm. It teaches us, that such as trust in their goods and riches, or that are puffed up with their honours and credit, are fools and blind. We have here represented the vanity and folly of the projects and schemes laid by worldly men for their own advancement, and the glory of their families. The prophet remarks, that God makes all their schemes abortive; that death robs them of all their glory; that they become a prey to the grave; and that their riches cannot redeem their souls, nor secure them from death and the judgment of God. Lastly, This Psalm teaches us, that it is not so with those that put their trust in God, since they are sure that he will redeem them, even from death, and will take them to himself to all eternity. High and low ought to attend to and meditate on these instructions, as the prophet exhorts them; those who are rich, or in an exalted station, should remember them, lest they forget God, and fall into pride; and people of mean rank should learn from hence never to envy the glory, riches, and prosperity, which fall to the lot of others; and all in general are here taught to wean their affections from the world, and to seek their happiness wholly in the favour and love of God.

PSALM L.

The design of this Psalm is, to reprove the hypocrisy of the *Israelites*, who placed their confidence in sacrifices and ceremonial observances, whilst they neglected to observe the most essential duties of religion. I. God here speaks to his people, and declares, that he regarded not sacrifices and external worship, but that the service he requires consists in praising and calling upon him with sincerity. II. He severely reproves hypocrites, who profess to live in covenant with him, and to serve him, and yet give themselves up to sin; he denounces his judgments against them, and exhorts them to true repentance.

Reflections.

This Psalm, which is very instructive, teaches us, that the service of God does not consist in outward duties, such as were the ancient sacrifices, and such as now are acts of public worship, ceremonies, and the outward profession of religion. Indeed, these duties are indispensable, and ought not to be neglected, since God has appointed them, and that they are agreeable to him, when discharged as they ought to be. However, the true worship which God requires, is to serve him in spirit and in truth, to praise him, to call upon him, and to do his will. As for those who profess to serve God, to take his covenant in their mouths, and who, nevertheless, abandon themselves to sin, and particularly to injustice, impurity, deceit, and slander; we see here, that God cannot endure their hypocrisy, and that if he does not punish them immediately, they must not imagine they shall escape his judgment. Sinners and false Christians should carefully improve to their advantage what is said in this Psalm; and all of us ought seriously to reflect upon it, that we may not offend God by an hypocritical worship, but calling upon him with sincerity, and studying, above all things, to do what he commandeth, may render to him such service as shall be acceptable in his sight, and procure his favour towards us.

PSALM LI.

This is king *David's* penitential Psalm, wherein he implores the mercy of God with great zeal and humility; makes confession of his sin; and prays to God to renew him by his Spirit, and to restore to him peace of conscience; that, having recovered his favour, he may praise him, and become an example to sinners. He hopes God will approve his repentance, and offers up prayers for the welfare of *Jerusalem* and the prosperity of the *Israelites*.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm is one of those that are of the most general use, and in which we may best observe the motions and characters of true repentance. Herein we discover, I. The lively sense *David* had of his sin, his humble and public confession of it before God and man, and his recourse to the mercy of God. II. We here observe, that *David* does not only pray God to pardon his sins, but likewise to deliver him from them, and grant him his Spirit to purify and renew him. III. We here see the promises he makes to return to the ways of godliness, and by his example and instructions to convert sinners. IV. *David* expresses his hope and confidence that God will not reject his repentance. Lastly, After he had prayed for himself, he entreats God to continue his blessing upon *Jerusalem*, and his whole kingdom. It appears from this Psalm that it is the duty of sinners, and particularly those that have fallen into great sins, to be sensible of the greatness of them, humbly to acknowledge and confess them, and even publicly before men, when it is necessary; earnestly to implore the mercy of God with true contrition, and to beg of him a sincere conversion, and the assistance of his Spirit, that they may never more fall into sin. Lastly, A penitent sinner, that is truly humbled for his sins, finds himself indispensably obliged to repair the scandal he has given, and contribute his utmost towards the conversion of other sinners, and the edification of all, by his example, by his exhortations, and by his prayers. This is the only way to obtain pardon for the sins we have committed, and to procure peace of conscience, and the renewal of the grace of God.

PSALM LII.

David denounces the judgments of God against one of *Saul's* counsellors, namely *Doeg*, who, by his slanders, had exasperated *Saul* against him, and had

occasioned the death of a great number of the priests, who were cruelly slain by *Saul*. For the right understanding of this Psalm, it is convenient to read the history related in the twenty-second chapter of the First Book of *Samuel*.

Reflections.

We may gather from this Psalm, I. That the wicked, and particularly cruel men and slanderers, such as *Doeg* was, receive from God the punishment they deserve; and that God abhors lying and calumny. II. That those who trust in their riches, or in their address, become examples of the just judgment of God; whilst he bestows his favour on those that put their trust in him, and walk in his ways.

PSALM LIII.

I. The prophet describes the extreme impiety and general corruption of the time in which he lived. II. He threatens the wicked with divine vengeance, and promises the righteous help and deliverance from the Almighty.

Reflections.

I. What *David* says at the beginning of this Psalm, *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*, does not imply, that all sinners actually believe there is no God; but the meaning of these words, as the prophet himself explains them, is, that their impiety was so great and so general, that wicked men lived as if they denied the being of a God. The complaint which *David* here makes of the impiety of the men of his age, may be applied to a great number of Christians, who profess to know God, but in works deny him, giving themselves up to all manner of impiety. II. It appears, however, from the evils which *David* says the righteous are exposed to by means of the ungodly, and from the promises made to the godly in afflictions, and when the corruption is most general, God has always some true worshippers, who lament this corruption, endeavour to keep

themselves free from the infection, and in the midst of the disorders that prevail, always look up to God, and put their trust in him. III. This Psalm engages us to consider further, that God beholds from heaven the sins which are committed; that he will punish them; and that those who dread not his power, shall one day have terror and consternation for their portion. Lastly, It should be remarked, that *St. Paul*, in the third chapter of his Epistle to the *Romans*, quotes this Psalm, to prove that the *Jews* were sinners as well as the heathen; that, consequently, they could not be justified by the law of *Moses*, but only by faith in *Jesus Christ*.

PSALM LIV.

KING *Saul* being informed by the men of *Ziph*, that *David* was retired into their country, and going thither to take him, *David* prays God to defend him from those that sought his death, and he promises to praise and bless him when he granted his request. The event which gave occasion to this prayer, is recorded in the twenty-third and twenty-sixth chapters of the First Book of *Samuel*.

Reflections.

IN this Psalm *David* does three things. I. He implores the divine assistance in the danger that threatened him. II. He expresses a firm reliance upon God. III. He promises to praise him for ever. The Royal Prophet teaches us by his example, that prayer should always be our refuge in the time of danger; that even when men have conspired our ruin, if we call upon the Lord with a pure heart, he will protect us; and that when he has heard us, we ought to bless him with all our heart, and make grateful acknowledgments.

PSALM LV.

David, fearing he should fall into the hands of his enemies, calls upon the Lord, and represents the ex-

treme danger he was in. He complains, that he had been betrayed and slandered by those very men whom he had shown the greatest friendship to, and had confided most in. However, he comforts himself with hopes that God would not forsake him, but would destroy those that sought his ruin.

Reflections.

THE example of *David* shows, I. That the faithful may be persecuted by wicked men, and even sometimes hated by those whose assistance they had reason to expect. II. That in this condition they apply themselves to God with confidence, and are assured he will support them, and restrain the malice of those who unjustly persecute them. However, we must take care not to make an ill use of this Psalm, and some others of the like nature, by applying what *David* says against his persecutors to the occasions which we may have of complaining against others, for any uneasiness or displeasure which we may be exposed to by them. The offences we receive are, generally speaking, trifling: and if not, a Christian is bound to forgive all, and to hate no man; and should be so far from making imprecations against any, that he ought to pray for those who do him the greatest injury, herein conforming to the laws of the Gospel, and to that pattern of patience and meekness which our Lord has given us in his life and death.

PSALM LVI.

David having been taken by the *Philistines* in the city of *Gath*, as we read in the twenty-first chapter of the First Book of *Samuel*, prays the Lord to have pity on him in that pressing danger; and to his prayer joins praises and thanksgivings, which show the great trust he put in God.

Reflections.

BY the example of *David* we are here taught, that

whatever extremity the children of God are in, and when even force and artifice are employed against them, they are not moved: that their trust in God is so firm, that they do not fear what man can do unto them; and that even before their deliverance they rejoice in the Lord, and pay him their vows and thanksgivings. *David* assures us likewise, that the sufferings of the righteous are precious in the sight of God, that he sees their troubles and afflictions, and that *he puts their tears into his bottle.* This is an inestimable blessing which piety procures for us, and is the greatest comfort in our adversities.

PSALM LVII.

David flying before *Saul,* and being hid in a cave, where he was surprised by *Saul,* as we read in the twenty-fourth chapter of the First Book of *Samuel,* offers up this prayer to God, in which he calls upon him for his help, and shows the firm confidence he had in his protection.

Reflections.

We find in this, as in the preceding Psalms, that *David,* animated by his piety, and supported by his faith, always applied to God for deliverance in the dangers that threatened him. Though we are not exposed to dangers like those of *David* formerly, and therefore cannot apply to ourselves all we read in this Psalm, we may nevertheless from hence conclude in general, that in our necessities we should draw nigh to God, and hide ourselves under the shadow of his wings; being fully persuaded, that he will not fail to send us help from heaven, and to deliver us. But that we may thus trust in him, we must always adhere stedfastly to our duty, and never make use of any unworthy means to extricate ourselves from any pressing difficulties; herein imitating *David,* who when he had it in his power to take away *Saul's* life, when that king came into the cave where he was, would not do it. Lastly, As *David,*

at the end of the Psalm praises the Lord with holy transports of joy; so it is our duty, after we have experienced the divine assistance, to thank and praise his holy name, and everywhere publish his goodness towards us.

PSALM LVIII.

I. This is a complaint of *David* against wicked judges, whose impiety and obstinacy to do evil he here describes. II. He likewise foretels, that the divine vengeance should quickly overtake and entirely destroy them. It is probable *David* here speaks of the counsellors of *Saul*.

Reflections.

This is a Psalm which those in public offices ought to take good notice of, because it teaches them, that if they do not administer strict justice, if they oppress the innocent with artifice or violence, the vengeance of God will overtake them. And in general, we see here, that all those who harden themselves in their evil ways, without hearkening to the voice of God, are likewise threatened with his vengeance. Lastly, we learn from this Psalm, that Providence governs all things righteously; and though the wicked prosper, and good men are afflicted for a while, yet they will always have reason to acknowledge, *That there is a reward for the righteous, and that there is a God who judges in the earth.*

PSALM LIX.

David, in danger of being taken by some persons whom *Saul* had sent to his house for that purpose, represents to the Lord the great danger he was in; not doubting but God would deliver him from his enemies, restrain their malice, and make them examples to all the world. The history which gave occasion to this Psalm is contained in the nineteenth chapter of the First Book of *Samuel*.

Reflections.

THAT we may improve by the reading of this Psalm, it is proper to make these two reflections. I. That *David's* prayers were heard, and that Providence furnished him with means of escaping the fury of *Saul*, who sought his life; from whence we learn, that the prayers of the faithful, and their confidence in God, are never in vain. II. It is to be observed, that what *David* says in this Psalm against his enemies, was not spoken out of a principle of hatred or revenge, but being persecuted unjustly, and his cause being that of God, he might, as a prophet, denounce the divine judgments against them. However, it is not lawful for any private person to make the like prayers. All we are allowed to do when men treat us with malice and injustice, is to keep within the bounds of that meekness prescribed in the Gospel, to return good for evil, and wait with patience for the divine assistance.

PSALM LX.

KING *David* describes in this Psalm, the wars and calamities to which the *Israelites* had been exposed, and the victories and deliverances that God had granted them. In the eighth chapter of the Second Book of *Samuel*, we learn what was the occasion of this Psalm.

Reflections.

I. THE first thing we observe in this Psalm is, that king *David* lays before God the miseries which had befallen the *Israelites:* which teaches us, that when nations are exposed to war, and other public calamities, God is the dispenser of them, to chastise and humble them. II. *David* celebrates the power and goodness of God, who had assisted his people, and given them the victory over their enemies. Thus is God reconciled with men, after he has afflicted them; and in particular disappoints the plots and con-

trivances of the enemies of his Church. Lastly, This Psalm teaches us, that the strength and assistance of man is but vanity, and that there is none but the Lord who can help and deliver us in our distress, and in whom we may safely and perfectly confide.

PSALM LXI.

THIS is a Psalm of prayer, and full of comfort. In it *David* prays the Lord to take him into his protection; and expresses the greatest joy and gratitude under the sense of God's favour, and the hope of his assistance.

Reflections.

IN this Psalm we see *David* groaning and calling upon the Lord for help; but at the same time we see him full of joy and confidence. Such are the dispositions of all those that fear God: they implore his assistance when any dangers threaten them, and make him their secure refuge. But at the same time their confidence in him is unshaken and constant, and they rejoice in full assurance of his favour, and a sense of his goodness; saying with the prophet, whatever their condition be, *O God, thou hast heard my desires; thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name; wherefore I will sing praise unto thy name for ever, and will daily perform my vows.*

PSALM LXII.

I. *David* testifies, that his confidence in God made him perfectly easy. II. He shows, that we ought not to trust in men, nor in worldly goods, but in God alone, who is the Lord of all things, and the judge of all men.

Reflections.

David teaches us, by his example, I. That the true and only way to enjoy uninterrupted peace and tranquillity of mind, is to trust in God alone: and

that when we depend upon him, we fear nothing that men can do to us. II. That it is great blindness to trust in men, who are vanity itself; to set our heart upon the good things of this world, or become proud and haughty when we abound in them. Lastly, He declares very expressly in this Song, that in the Almighty alone we ought to place our confidence, since he is the Lord and Judge of the world, and will render to every one according to his works. These three instructions, contained in this Psalm, are of the greatest use to secure our happiness and tranquillity.

PSALM LXIII.

King *David*, being persecuted, and flying into the wilderness of *Judah*, as we read in the twenty-third chapter of the First Book of *Samuel*, offers up to God the prayer contained in this Psalm, wherein he declares, that he desired nothing so earnestly as to be in the house of the Lord, and that the sense of God's goodness filled him with unspeakable joy, and a confidence not to be shaken by all the attempts of his enemies.

Reflections.

I. The ardent zeal with which *David*, when a fugitive, and persecuted, desired to enjoy the presence of the Lord in his holy tabernacle, shows, that whilst we are strangers and sojourners in this world, there is nothing we ought more earnestly to desire, than to serve God, to praise him in his house, and to behold his face one day in heaven. II. The comfort, joy, and confidence, which *David* gives such extraordinary proofs of in this Psalm, most evidently show, that the sense of the grace and love of God produces unspeakable joy and satisfaction in the hearts of the faithful, even when they are most afflicted; that they fear no evil whilst they are under his protection; and that nothing can disturb or rob them of their peace. If therefore we desire to attain true happiness, we must seek it in God alone, that he may be our comfort and joy.

PSALM LXIV.

THE Psalmist entreats God to defend him from the subtilty and cruelty of his enemies, and foretells their ruin, which he says will be manifest to all.

Reflections.

WE see here, how the wicked often make use of artifices and deceit to succeed in their designs, and to destroy the innocent; but that God preserves those that call upon him, and trust in him, from the snares that are laid for them, and turns the devices of their enemies to their own confusion. This is a doctrine which ought to fill the righteous with joy and confidence, and engage us to adore the goodness, wisdom, and justice of the Lord, in his proceedings both with good and bad men.

PSALM LXV.

THIS Psalm has two parts. In the first, *David* speaks of the spiritual blessings which God granted to those that worshipped him in *Sion;* and in the second, of the temporal blessings which God bestowed upon the children of *Israel;* and particularly of the fruitfulness of the land of *Canaan.*

Reflections.

THE two parts of this Psalm contain chiefly these two instructions: I. That as God was formerly worshipped in *Sion,* and there hearkened to the prayers that were offered up to him, he now dwells in his Church, and receives favourably the desires of all those that call upon him, pardons their sins, and poureth his benefits upon them. This should convince us how happy we are in being members of the Church of God, and in the number of those whom he has chosen, and for whom he has prepared those comforts of infinite price, which refresh the soul, and produce that fulness of joy which *David* here expresses. II. The next instruction is, that God

governs the world by his power; and particularly, that he provides men with the necessaries of this life, by making the land fruitful, and causing it to produce bread for our sustenance. These reflections should convince us of our obligation to celebrate and praise his name, and to thank him, as the author of all the good things we enjoy, and gratefully employ them to his glory.

PSALM LXVI.

THIS is an exhortation to celebrate the divine power, and the deliverances God had granted his people, in bringing them out of *Egypt*, and upon several other occasions. The prophet praises God afterwards for the favours he had received from him, and calls upon all good men to join their praises with his, and to learn by his example, to trust in God, and to fear him more and more.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm engages us, I. To celebrate the power and glory of God, which appear particularly in the wonders he has done in all ages for his Church, both under the Old and New Testament. II. We learn here, that God, to try the faithful, delivers them up sometimes to the power of the wicked, and causes them to pass through fire and water; that is, exposes them to trials and dangers; that he proceeds thus with them to prove them, and to purify them; but that at last he delivers them, and grants them rest. III. The example of the prophet teaches us, that when God has delivered us from any danger, we should thank him for it, declare his goodness, and stir up our neighbours to praise him with us: but above all, that we should faithfully discharge the vows and promises we made to him in our distress. IV. We ought to take great notice of these words of the Psalmist; *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* They teach us, that God does not receive the prayers of the wicked;

and that if we desire he should hear us, our heart ought to be upright and sincere before him; and that we should sincerely and inviolably adhere to his worship, and the promoting his glory.

PSALM LXVII.

THE people of *Israel* pray God to bless them, and to grant that all the people in the world may praise and adore him.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm engages us to these two duties: I. We are to look upon the blessings of God as the source of all temporal and spiritual good things that may contribute to our happiness, and to pray continually to him in the words of the prophet, saying, *God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us.* II. We must offer up this prayer, not only for ourselves, but for all people, that God would make himself known to them, and that his name may be praised by all nations. This prayer suits us still better than it did the *Jews,* since under the Gospel Dispensation the nations of the earth were to be enlightened with the knowledge of God, and enriched with his blessing, through *Christ Jesus.*

PSALM LXVIII.

David celebrates the power of the Lord, which he had been pleased to give proofs of, by destroying the enemies of his people, by leading them in the wilderness, and by bringing them into the land of *Canaan,* where that people enjoyed perfect prosperity under the divine protection. This Psalm, which was sung when the ark of the covenant was removed to *Jerusalem,* is partly prophetical, and contains several things that relate to *Christ Jesus* and his kingdom.

Reflections.

We learn in general from this Psalm, that God has in all times displayed his power in favour of his people, by protecting them against their enemies, and by showering down his mercies upon them. This he has done for the Christian Church, as well as for the children of *Israel:* And what is said in this Psalm of the protection God vouchsafed to mount *Sion*, against the assaults of the neighbouring nations, should convince us that the Church shall always subsist, in spite of all the attempts of the world and the devil. There are two remarkable prophecies in this Psalm: the first is this, *Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men.* In the other, the Holy Ghost foretells, that kings, and the most distant people, should come and worship the true God. The first of these prophecies was accomplished, when our Lord ascended into heaven; as St. *Paul* shows in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the *Ephesians*, where he quotes this prophecy, and applies it to the ascension of *Jesus Christ*, and to the gifts he bestowed on his Church by his word and Spirit. And the second was fulfilled when several nations were converted by the preaching of the Gospel; but it will be accomplished after a more perfect manner in the latter days: and this ought to be the subject of our prayers, our hopes, and our thanksgivings.

PSALM LXIX.

King *David*, being overwhelmed with the violence of his afflictions, does three things in this Psalm: I. He prays the Lord to have compassion on him, and to come to his assistance; and describes the extremity he was reduced to, by the hatred and malice of his enemies. II. He denounces the judgments of God against them. III. He concludes this Psalm with praises and thanksgivings.

Reflections.

David seems here in very great affliction, and in a condition almost past remedy. This example teaches us, that the children of God may sometimes be reduced to a very deplorable state; and in particular, be exposed to the hatred and contempt of the world, because of their zeal for the glory of God. But the prayers and thanksgivings which *David* joins to his complaints, show, that the faithful, in the midst of their greatest distress, still hope in God; that they call upon him for aid and assistance with fervency, humility, and confidence; and that not only after, but even before he delivers them, they praise him, and give him thanks for the help they expect to receive from his goodness. If *David* expresses himself as if he seemed to desire the punishment of his enemies, we must consider that they are not properly imprecations against them; they are rather predictions than wishes; and therefore what he says will by no means justify us in wishing evil to any person whatsoever; or to intercede with God to take vengeance on those who injure us. Lastly, We are to observe that *David* speaks in this Psalm as a type of *Jesus Christ:* here we see the Lord's zeal for the glory of God; the contempt to which he was exposed; the gall and vinegar that was offered to him on the cross; the fatal end of *Judas:* and the obstinacy and rejection of the *Jews.* This appears from the application which the apostles make in the New Testament of several passages in this Psalm.

PSALM LXX.

David, being pursued by his enemies, prays the Lord to come to his assistance.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm teaches us, that God comes to the help of such as are unjustly persecuted; that the expectation of the righteous in their afflictions is never

vain; and that the deliverances he vouchsafes them, give them and all good men reason to rejoice, and celebrate his goodness.

PSALM LXXI.

KING *David* composed this Psalm in his old age, and probably at the time of the rebellion of his son *Absalom*. He beseeches God to deliver him, and to let him again experience the same goodness which he had felt the effects of from his youth. He complains of the insults and cruelty of his enemies; and, in full assurance that God will protect him, he is filled with a holy joy, and vows to bless him for ever.

Reflections.

WE may learn from hence, I. That those who trust in God are never confounded; and that they may betake themselves to him under all their wants, with a perfect assurance of his help; but that this confidence cannot be well-grounded, unless they have the same pious sentiments as *David* discovers in this Psalm. II. As this prince, for his comfort, and encouragement to praise God, called to mind the favours he had received from him in time past, so should we preserve the remembrance of the mercies God had vouchsafed us from our youth, and through the whole course of our lives. In this meditation we meet with occasions of joy and gratitude, and motives of comfort and confidence for the time to come; which is more especially the duty of those persons, who, like *David*, are in an advanced age. III. It is the duty of those who have been exposed to great afflictions, and whom God has happily delivered, to join with his holy prophet in admiring and celebrating the goodness of the Lord towards them, saying, *O God, who is like unto thee? Thou which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, hast quickened me again, and brought me again from the depths of the earth.*

Thus ought we, who enjoy so many mercies, and especially spiritual graces, to bless his holy name in all things, and never cease to publish the wonders of his love.

PSALM LXXII.

THIS Psalm was composed when *Solomon* was made king. In it *David* prays God to give his son *Solomon* the wisdom and righteousness which was necessary for him, to enable him to govern his people. We have here likewise a description of the glory and extent of *Solomon's* kingdom, and of the happiness his subjects would enjoy under him.

Reflections.

THERE are two things to be considered in this Psalm: I. The prayers that *David* made for the prosperity of *Solomon*, teach us, that kings and people ought to desire of God, as a thing of the greatest consequence, that he would grant to those that rule over kingdoms, justice, wisdom, clemency, and all other virtues that are necessary for them; and that, in order to secure the happiness and good government of a people, it is not sufficient that they have a powerful prince, and live in plenty, but justice should be administered among them, the wicked should be punished, and the righteous and innocent protected. II. It is to be observed, that most of the things mentioned in this Psalm, agree more perfectly to the kingdom of our Lord than to that of *Solomon;* since *Jesus Christ* was to be that glorious King, who was to bring the most distant people into subjection, whose kingdom was to last to the end of the world, and under whose government men were to enjoy complete happiness, and be filled with the choicest blessings of heaven. We have therefore in this Psalm the description of our own happiness, which should put into our mouths the praises with which *David* concludes this song: *Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things. And blessed be his*

glorious name for ever: And let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen and Amen.

This concludes the Second Book of Psalms.

PSALM LXXIII.

Asaph represents in this Psalm, that seeing the prosperity of the wicked, and the sad condition of good men, he had been very much staggered by the temptation; but that, after he had considered the ways of the Lord, he discovered that the prosperity of the wicked leads them to eternal misery; from whence he concludes, that all his happiness consists in cleaving to the Lord only. This Psalm ought to be carefully considered for the instructions and pious sentiments contained in it.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm teaches us how we are to judge of the prosperity of the wicked and afflictions of the righteous. We ought never to believe that wicked men, who live in mirth and plenty in this world, and who enjoy all their wishes, are truly happy, or that the righteous, because they are afflicted, serve God in vain. *Asaph* has taught us, that to resist this temptation, which is a very dangerous one, we must meditate upon the word of God and the ways of Providence; that then we shall find, that the felicity of worldly men is vain and of short duration; and that they are set in slippery places, from whence they fall suddenly. If we add to these considerations what the Gospel has revealed concerning the condition of good and bad men after this life, we shall never be staggered either at the prosperous flourishing state of the ungodly, or the sufferings of the righteous, and instead of being tempted to forsake the fear of the Lord, we shall cleave to him more and more, by a lively faith, and by such sentiments of love and confidence, as *Asaph* expresses when he says, *I am continually with thee; thou hast holden*

me by my right hand; thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. It is good for me to draw near to God.

PSALM LXXIV.

In this Psalm, which was composed upon occasion of the destruction of the temple of *Jerusalem*, the Church of the *Jews* does two things: I. It speaks of the destruction and burning of the temple, and the melancholy state which it was reduced to in its captivity, being deprived of the tokens of the covenant of God, and of his favour. II. That Church implores the assistance of the Almighty, and is comforted with the consideration of the deliverances he had formerly granted to his people, and the proofs he gives of his omnipotence, in the order of the world, and the general course of nature.

Reflections.

This Psalm engages us to make these four principal reflections: I. That the Church has been, in all ages, exposed to persecution; and therefore we ought not to wonder, if the Christian Church has been, and still is, sometimes persecuted. II. That as God, to punish the *Jews* for their abuse of his service, had suffered their temple to be burnt, and them to be led into captivity by idolaters; for the same reasons he has often delivered his Church into the hands of persecutors, and deprived nations of the benefit of his word, and removed their candlestick; but when he thus afflicts his Church, his design is to chastise it, to try it, and to purify it. III. The third reflection is, that when God appears the most provoked with his people, he does not quite forsake them, but always remembers his covenant, and delivers them at last by his power and goodness. Thus it has always happened, as the *Jews* particularly experienced, when God delivered them from the *Baby-*

lonish captivity, and they rebuilt the temple of *Jerusalem*, the destruction of which is lamented in this Psalm. Lastly, As the prophet was grieved for the desolation of the temple, and the calamities of the *Jews*, and most devoutly prayed for their restoration, so Christians ought to be sensibly affected with the misfortunes of the Church, and to pray continually for its deliverance and prosperity.

PSALM LXXV.

THE author of this Psalm, which is probably *David*, praises God, that after divers troubles he had established him in his kingdom; and he vows to govern it righteously, and to suppress the wicked: he shows likewise, that it is God who disposes all things, who raises some, and abases others; and who, as judge of the world, punishes the wicked, and protects good men.

Reflections.

THE instructions we meet with in this Psalm are, I. That it is God who establishes and strengthens kings, and gives peace to their dominions. II. That it is the duty of kings and princes, and in general of all magistrates, to exercise justice, to restrain the wicked and the proud, and to protect the innocent. III. That we must not be lifted up in prosperity, nor make an ill use of power. IV. That the exaltation and abasement of men proceed from God, who by his Providence governs the world with wisdom and justice. And lastly, that God reserves a just and severe punishment for the wicked, but that he always gives proofs of his favour to good men.

PSALM LXXVI.

THIS is a song of thanksgiving for some great victory that God had vouchsafed his people; and an exhortation to acknowledge the power and majesty of God.

Reflections.

In this Psalm we have a magnificent description of the power which God displayed in behalf of his people *Israel*, when they were assaulted by powerful and formidable enemies. From whence we may conclude, that as God is always the same, he will do for his Church as he has always done; and therefore, that we need not fear either the wrath or power of men. All true believers may have the same confidence in the divine love and protection; which should engage us to pay our vows and services to the great God, and to revere his infinite power, as the prophet does here exhort us.

PSALM LXXVII.

I. The Psalmist here describes the greatness of his afflictions, and the conflicts he had endured in himself, being even afraid that God had rejected him for ever. II. He represents likewise, how he was comforted in that condition by meditating upon the mercy of the Lord, upon his promises, and upon the wonders he had formerly wrought for the people of *Israel*.

Reflections.

There are two things to be considered in this Psalm, which are particularly adapted to persons in affliction. I. The sighs and complaints of the prophet show, that persons who are otherwise acceptable to God are sometimes in extreme anguish, and have great conflicts in themselves, and are deprived of the actual sense of God's grace to such a degree, that God seems to have forsaken them, and withdrawn his love from them. II. Those who pass through such trials, may learn from hence, that the way not to sink under their grief, is to meditate on God's infinite mercy, the firmness of his covenant, and the marks he has given, at divers times, of his love and protection to his people, and to all his faithful servants. But Christians have still greater motives

of comfort, when they reflect upon God's love manifested in *Christ Jesus*, and all that our great Redeemer has suffered in body and soul for our redemption, and to bring about our reconciliation with God.

PSALM LXXVIII.

THIS historical Psalm is an abridgment of the history of the children of *Israel*, and of the favours which God had granted to that people; of their various sins, and of the punishments inflicted upon them by God; and in particular, of what befel them when they were conquered, and the ark of the covenant was taken by the *Philistines* in the time of *Eli* the high-priest. This history begins at the departure out of *Egypt*, and reaches to the reign of king *David;* at which time the ark, which had been before at *Shiloh*, and then at *Kirjath-jearim*, was brought to *Jerusalem*, where the service of God was afterwards established.

Reflections.

THERE are four things especially to be remarked in the history of the *Israelites*, which we here have an abridgment of. I. God's kindness to that nation, and the miracles he had wrought for them in *Egypt*, in the wilderness, and in the land of *Canaan*. II. The ingratitude of the *Israelites*, their frequent murmurings against God, and their insensibility under his chastisements and long-suffering. III. The punishment which God inflicted on them for their rebellion and infidelity, giving them up into the hands of their enemies; and in particular, of the *Philistines*, who conquered them and took the ark of the covenant. IV. The deliverance which God vouchsafed the *Israelites;* punishing the *Philistines*, bringing the ark back into the land of *Israel*, and some time after settling *David* on the throne. This Psalm, which was written for the instruction of the *Israelites*, should likewise serve for ours, and may teach us, 1. That we ought carefully to preserve the remembrance of God's mercies; and that it is the

duty of parents to teach them to their children and their posterity. 2. That the mercies of God engage us to love and fear him; and that if the *Jews* became guilty before God, by their sins and frequent rebellions, our ingratitude would be still more heinous, if, after all that God has done for us, we should prove faithless. 3. The judgments which fell upon the *Jews*, inform us, that God cannot leave those sins unpunished, which are committed by persons who have received great favours from him; and that if we imitate the *Jews* in their rebellion, we have reason to expect the most dreadful effects of God's wrath and vengeance. Lastly, the judgments of God upon the enemies of his people, and the favours he bestowed on them, after he had afflicted them, should convince us, that God cannot neglect to promote his own glory, and will for ever be the support and defender of his Church.

PSALM LXXIX.

THE *Jews* complain in this Psalm, that the idolaters had destroyed the city and temple of *Jerusalem;* and beseech God to be reconciled with his people, and to punish the blasphemies and cruelties of their enemies.

Reflections.

WE are here to consider, I. The deplorable state the *Jews* were reduced to, when God delivered their city and temple to the fury of the *Babylonians*. This afflicted people acknowledge, that their sins had provoked the wrath of God. To the same cause we may ascribe the evils and calamities, with which God visits men, and particularly his Church; and we have here a memorable instance to prove that God does not spare those who are received into covenant with him, when they break it; and that he punishes them sometimes with great severity. II. This Psalm teaches us likewise, that when the Church is perse-

cuted, we should implore the mercy of God in its behalf, and endeavour to turn his wrath by our repentance. III. As the *Jews* hoped God would take vengeance for his servants' blood, and would deliver them for the glory of his name, lest the idolaters should insult and blaspheme, we ought firmly to believe that God is engaged by his own glory to set bounds to the malice of his persecutors, and in general to restrain the malice of the ungodly, and those who provoke him.

PSALM LXXX.

THE *Israelites* represent the extreme desolation they were reduced to; they entreat the Lord to come to their deliverance, and to remember the covenant he had made with his people; that they promise to turn unto him, and to bless his holy name.

Reflections.

THERE are these three things to be observed in this Psalm, I. The first is, that if the *Israelites*, who were the people of God, the sheep of his pasture, and the vineyard which he himself had planted, and cultivated with particular care, was exposed to so terrible a desolation as is here described, the sufferings of the Christian Church should not surprise us, especially since *Jesus Christ* has foretold it should be persecuted. II. The next reflection is, that in a time of calamity and suffering we must apply to God to be restored to his favour; and that the true way to put a stop to his wrath is, to be converted, and never more to depart from him. Lastly, what is said in this Psalm, may be applied to the havoc which wickedness and impiety usually make in the Church, when it enjoys peace and temporal prosperity; and believers have not less reason to beseech God to sanctify and defend it against its spiritual enemies, than to pray that he would secure it against persecutors, who seek to destroy it.

PSALM LXXXI.

THIS Psalm was designed as a Psalm of praise to God in the feasts which the *Jews* kept, the first day of every month. God speaks to his people and reproaches them, that notwithstanding he had blessed them, and given them his law, they were fallen into rebellion. The Lord testifies his earnest desire that his people should obey him; to the end that he might shower down his blessings upon them.

Reflections.

I. THIS Psalm should excite us to praise God, and to pay him our homage in a most zealous and solemn manner. This duty does not less concern Christians than the *Jews;* and if God bestowed considerable favours on the *Jews,* by bringing them out of *Egypt,* and giving them his law, he has done incomparably greater things for us, in redeeming us by *Jesus Christ* his Son, and giving us the knowledge of his Gospel. II. God here declares, in the most clear and express manner, that he is always disposed to load men with his favours; that he offers them his grace; that he desires nothing but their welfare and salvation; and that if men are miserable, it is only because they will not hear his voice, but wilfully harden their hearts. What God says in this Psalm, teaches us likewise, that when men refuse to hearken to him, and choose to follow their own inclinations rather than obey him, he gives them up to their own hardness, and deprives them of the effects of his love.

PSALM LXXXII.

THIS is a grave remonstrance, addressed to magistrates and judges. The prophet represents to them, that God was in the midst of them, and exhorts them to exercise justice with uprightness, and tells them, that though they were in authority, they were but

mortal men; and that God who was the judge of the world, would judge them, and render to them according to their works.

Reflections.

JUDGES, magistrates, and all that are in authority, ought to improve by the subject of this Psalm; and remember, that God, having established them for the administration of justice, is present at their judgments; that it is therefore their duty to do right to every one, without respect of persons; and above all, to protect the weak and innocent when oppressed. For which reason, they ought to remember, that although they are set above others, yet they must die one day like all the rest of mankind, and that then they shall appear before the Supreme Judge, to give an account of their actions.

PSALM LXXXIII.

SEVERAL of the neighbouring nations being gathered together to make war against the *Israelites*, the prophet entreats the Lord to destroy those nations, as he had formerly destroyed the kings that assaulted the children of *Israel*.

Reflections.

THE contents of this Psalm engage us to consider, I. That as God formerly permitted the people bordering upon the *Israelites* to unite themselves against them, he suffers also, for wise and just reasons, that his Church at some times should be exposed to the assaults of a great number of powerful and formidable enemies; and that the just should be exposed to the contradiction and malice of the world. II. That God, by his infinite power, has always defeated the contrivances of those who seek the ruin of his Church; and that all the united strength of men can prevail nothing against it, nor against those whom he loves, and favours with his protection.

PSALM LXXXIV.

THE prophet being removed from the tabernacle, fervently desires to come near it; he celebrates with devout transports the happiness of those that could go into it at all times, and declares he would prefer that happiness before all the advantages of the world. It is probable king *David* offered up this prayer to God when his son *Absalom's* rebellion obliged him to depart from *Jerusalem.*

Reflections.

WHAT is chiefly to be considered here is, the tender and sincere regard which the faithful bear to the service of God. The fervent regard that *David* here expresses for the tabernacle, and for the altar of God, teaches us, that there is nothing we ought to wish with so much earnestness, as to serve God, and to praise him; that this is the greatest happiness and comfort we can enjoy in this life; that it is an advantage preferable to all the riches and glories of the world since the *Lord will give grace and glory; and will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly.* Lastly, we are to make this reflection on this Psalm; that if the children of God thus desire to praise him, and to serve him in this world, they aspire with still greater ardour, to see his face in heaven, and to praise him for ever in the assembly.

PSALM LXXXV.

THE *Israelites,* having been delivered from some great calamity, return thanks to God for being reconciled to them, pray him to complete their restoration, promise inviolable fidelity, and hope that he will shower down his blessings upon them.

Reflections.

IN this Psalm we have two principal instructions, I. That God makes men, and sometimes his own

people and his Church, feel the effects of his wrath for the punishment of their sins; and that the end, which he proposes by it is, to recover men from their errors. II. That when he sees men humbled, he is reconciled with them, and is always ready to deliver them that fear him, and to bestow on them his choicest blessings, both temporal and spiritual.

PSALM LXXXVI.

David, in great affliction, with fervent zeal and firm confidence, calls upon the Lord; begs of him, above all things, grace to know and fear him, and to walk in his ways; and beseeches him to deliver him from his enemies, according to his mercy and promises.

Reflections.

THIS prayer, and the example of king *David,* should excite and encourage those who are in affliction and distress to call upon God for help, with profound humility, and firm confidence in his mercy and power; beseeching him, not only to deliver them from the evils which press sore upon them, but above all, to give them grace to please and obey him, as *David* did in this prayer: *Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: Unite my heart to fear thy name.* We ought likewise, in our troubles, to meditate upon God's infinite goodness, and consider *that he is full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth,* and always ready to give tokens of his favour to those that serve him. This will support us under all our trials, fill us with joy and consolation, and afford us, even in the midst of trouble, reason to praise and bless him.

PSALM LXXXVII.

THE prophet describes the glory of *Jerusalem,* and of *Sion,* and foretells, that all the nations should admire the happiness of that city, and of the people of God, and desire to be partakers of it.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm, which describes the glory of the *Israelites*, is still better suited to the Christian church. The Holy Ghost foretells therein, that the Pagans, and the most distant nations, should be one day admitted into the divine covenant, and numbered among the worshippers of the true God. This is our happiness, through the coming of our Lord *Jesus Christ*; and for this we ought to return continual thanks to God.

PSALM LXXXVIII.

THE prophet, who composed this Psalm, seems to be in the deepest affliction, and almost deprived of all consolation. He represents therein the violence and the continuance of his sufferings, and the terrors which discomposed his mind; and complains, that God did not hear him, though he called upon him with great fervency.

Reflections.

THE reading and meditating on this Psalm is very proper for the comfort and instruction of those that are overwhelmed with deep sorrow. The condition of the prophet, who speaks here, may convince them that the saints have undergone the like trials; that they have been, as it were, forsaken and deprived of all comfort, so that for a considerable time God seemed to pursue them in his wrath, and scourge them severely. Wherefore, those that fear God should not lose courage when they are exposed to outward afflictions, and even inwardly troubled for want of comfort, and by the terrors they feel in their soul. But they ought to represent to God their sad condition, wait with patience for his consolation, and remember likewise, that anguish of spirit does not hinder God from beholding them in his mercy. This we are more certainly assured of, by the terrors which our Lord felt in his soul at the time of his passion, than by the example of the prophet, who speaks in this Psalm.

PSALM LXXXIX.

THIS Psalm was composed at a time when the people of God were in affliction and calamity. The prophet here describes the majesty, power, and goodness of the Lord; which appeared in delivering the children of *Israel*, when he brought them out of *Egypt;* and in the covenant he made with *David*, promising to establish his throne to himself and his posterity. He next represents, that, notwithstanding these promises, the kingdom of *Judah* was at that time in great desolation, being despoiled of its glory, and delivered into the hands of its enemies; and implores the compassion of the Lord.

Reflections.

I. THE reading of this Psalm should animate us with an holy zeal to declare the loving kindness of the Lord, his power and faithfulness, which appear in the creation and government of the world, and in the wonders he has done, not only for the children of *Israel*, but also in behalf of the Christian Church. II. We are to observe in this Psalm, that nations are perfectly happy when God favours them with his wholesome presence, and is himself their buckler, their strength, and their glory. III. What is here said of the promises made to *David* and his posterity, and the deplorable condition which the descendants of that prince were reduced to, shows, that God protects kings and nations whilst they continue faithful to him; but when they break his covenant, he withdraws his protection from them; that, nevertheless, he does not forsake them entirely, and chastises them only for their conversion, and to bring them to himself. IV. We must remember, that the covenant, which God had made with *David*, and the promises, with which he had engaged to establish his throne and his posterity for ever, related to the Messiah; and that it was verified in the kingdom of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, which will subsist

to all eternity. Lastly, Under all our afflictions, whether general or particular, we ought, with the prophet, humbly to entreat the Lord to assist us, to remember his covenant, and to consider our unworthiness, since we are only weak and mortal creatures before him, and have nothing to expect but from his power and goodness.

Here ends the Third Book of Psalms.

PSALM XC.

For the right understanding of this Psalm, it is necessary to observe, that when the children of *Israel* were in the wilderness, God, provoked with their murmuring and infidelity, declared, that all those who came out of *Egypt* above the age of twenty years, should die in the wilderness within the space of forty years, and should not enter into the land of *Canaan*, as appears in the fourteenth chapter of *Numbers*. It was upon that occasion, and at the time when abundance of the people died, that *Moses* made his prayer to God. In it he describes the vanity and miseries of human life; acknowledges that the sins of the *Israelites* had kindled the wrath of God against them, and made their days be so much shortened, and was the reason why those who came out of *Egypt* in their full strength, waxed not old. He beseeches God to give his people grace to make a good use of his corrections, and seriously consider the vanities of this life. Lastly, he begs God to return with his favour, and prays him to be reconciled with his people.

Reflections.

This Psalm presents us with several very wholesome instructions. I. We here learn, that God, who is the creator of the world, and has given men life, makes them, when he pleases, return to dust; that life is short, and is soon passed away, and is moreover attended with many troubles and afflictions.

II. We are to consider, that as the rebellion of the *Israelites* exposed them to the wrath of God, and to death in the wilderness, so the miseries of this life, and death itself, are the consequences of sin; but, to the children of God, death is an effect of his love, and a means which he makes use of to procure their happiness. III. *Moses* teaches us, that the use we ought to make of our knowledge of the shortness of this life, is to learn from thence to become wise, and fear God, and by prayer to apply to him, that whilst we remain in this world, he would be pleased always to grant us his grace, and makes us at all times feel the effects of his bounty, that we may pass this life in peace and happiness. Lastly, The consideration of the vanities of the present life, should raise our thoughts to the expectation of a better, and make us aspire after that immortality which is prepared for us in the heavens, and has been purchased for us by *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

PSALM XCI.

This Psalm is an excellent description of the protection with which God favours those who fear him, and trust in him, and of the blessings which he bestows upon them.

Reflections.

We may see in this Psalm how happy those are that trust in God, and draw near to him. The prophet assures us, that God covers them with his protection: that being near God, they are in safety, and in time of trouble fear no evil. God commands his angels to keep them from all dangers; he loves them tenderly; he preserves them from every thing that might hurt them, delivers them when they call upon him in their distress, and heaps upon them all kinds of blessings. These glorious privileges and excellent promises are very proper to comfort and encourage all such as fear God, and to fill them with unspeakable joy, and unshaken confidence. They likewise

teach us, that if we desire to enjoy real and solid happiness, we must wean ourselves from the world, seek all our happiness in God alone, and study only, and above all things, to please him.

PSALM XCII.

THIS Psalm was to be recited upon the sabbath-day. The prophet herein celebrates, with great zeal and holy joy, the marvellous works of God; above all, he admires the wise conduct of Providence towards the wicked, and towards good men. He shows, that if the wicked prosper for a while, they are rooted out at the last; whereas God crowns the righteous with all manner of blessings.

Reflections.

SINCE we learn, from the first words of this Psalm, that *it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to declare his goodness and faithfulness day and night;* we ought all of us to be animated with a holy zeal, to the diligent, cheerful, and earnest discharge of a duty so just and so agreeable. This we shall have a powerful motive to, if we apply ourselves to the consideration of the works of God, which are great and marvellous; and, above all, if we attend to the ways of Providence, and the conduct of the Almighty towards good and bad men. It sometimes happens that wicked and worldly men flourish, and are happy, but their posterity passeth away like the grass; God destroys them, and roots them out utterly. On the contrary, he blesses the righteous, secures their happiness, and makes them prosper and flourish and bear fruit, even unto their old age, and to be in this world examples of his mercy and faithfulness. This doctrine, which is of the greatest importance, affords us extraordinary motives to praise the wise providence of God, and to celebrate his justice, and addict ourselves continually to purity and innocence; that we may partake of those excellent blessings, with which God promises to reward the piety of those who fear him, and trust in him.

PSALM XCIII.

In this Psalm the prophet celebrates the greatness of God, and the sovereign power by which he rules over all things, and particularly over his people.

Reflections.

This Psalm teaches us, that God rules with glory and magnificence over all the world; that his throne is established in righteousness; that his power infinitely exceeds that of all created beings: from whence we are to conclude, that he will reign for ever, for the good and advantage of his people, and of all those who serve him, and submit themselves to him.

PSALM XCIV.

I. In this prayer, the children of *Israel* represent to God the sad condition they were reduced to by the cruelty of their enemies, whose insolence, impiety, and blasphemies they describe. II. The prophet nevertheless adores the wisdom and goodness of God, in the corrections wherewith he visits men; and foretells the deliverance of the righteous, and the destruction of the wicked.

Reflections.

What here commands our attention is, 1. The description he gives of the wicked and ungodly. He represents them as cruel and unjust; and at the same time, as impious wretches, who insult the Deity with their blasphemies, saying, at the very time they are committing their crimes, that God does not see them, nor will punish them. This is the highest pitch of wickedness, to add impiety to sin, and not to fear God when we offend him. II. We learn from this Psalm, that good men abhor these impious sentiments, and are firmly persuaded that God, who has formed and created men, knows all their actions, all their words, and all their thoughts, and that he will be their judge.

III. Another instruction we here receive, regards the usefulness of God's corrections, which is expressed in these words: *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law.* The last reflection is, that God will never forsake his people, and his inheritance; that he is the defender of the faithful; that he is the joy of their souls in the midst of their troubles; and that he supports them against those who persecute them, and seek to destroy them.

PSALM XCV.

THIS Psalm has two parts. In the first, the Psalmist invites the *Israelites* to praise God, and to adore his majesty. In the second he exhorts them to obey the voice of God, and not to imitate the hardness of their fathers, whose rebellions in the wilderness were the cause of their being excluded from the land of *Canaan.*

Reflections.

THIS Psalm engages us to two duties. The first is, to render to God, with an holy joy and fervency, the adorations and praises which belong to him, on account of his power and majesty; but above all, because he is our God, and we have the happiness to be his people. The second duty is, To improve the exhortations which *David* addresses to the *Israelites,* not to harden their hearts as their fathers had done. These words, *To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts:* and those, *I have sworn in my wrath that they shall not enter into my rest;* do concern Christians as well as the *Jews;* as the author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews,* in the third and fourth chapters, observes, where he bids us take heed, lest by hardness of heart, and rebellion against the Gospel, we should be deprived of eternal rest, as the rebellious *Israelites* were excluded from the land of *Canaan* for their incredulity.

PSALM XCVI.

THIS Psalm invites the *Israelites*, and all people, to bless the Lord, to call upon him, and worship him, as the only true God; to celebrate his power, and submit with joy to his government.

Reflections.

I. WHEN the prophet, in this Psalm, exhorted all the nations of the earth to sing praises unto God, and to come and worship in his temple; they were not in a condition to discharge this duty, because they were engaged in ignorance and idolatry. Therefore these exhortations are peculiarly applicable to the times of the Gospel, and describe the zeal which should inspire us, and the joy which good men should express, when they reflect, that the several nations of the earth are enlightened with the knowledge of the true God, and of his son *Jesus Christ*. These great privileges, which we are partakers of, engage us to praise the Lord without ceasing, and publish abroad the deliverance he has vouchsafed us, and the marvellous things he has done for our sakes; to worship him with fear, humility, and joy; and, above all, to present him the oblation he requires of us, which is to offer him our heart, and show by our obedience that the Lord does truly reign over us; and that we make all our happiness, and all our glory, consist in belonging to him.

PSALM XCVII.

THE subject of this Psalm is the same as of the foregoing. It is an exhortation to celebrate the majesty and omnipotence of God, and the glory of his kingdom, and to rejoice in the advantages which the establishment of this kingdom procures to those who submit to it.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm is not so much a description of God's dominion over the *Jews*, as a prophecy of the esta-

blishment of the kingdom of *Jesus Christ* over all nations, and the destruction of idolatry and impiety. The Holy Spirit here describes the effects which the coming of that kingdom would produce, and the joy which the faithful would feel when it should be manifested; wherefore it principally concerns us to improve those affections of zeal and devotion which are manifest in this divine song. We here learn that the best way of praising God, and the true character of his worshippers, is to love him, to hate evil, and to rejoice in him continually. Lastly, We here see, that God crowns with glory and happiness those that fear him, which is contained in these excellent promises; *The Lord preserveth the souls of his saints, and delivers them out of the hand of the wicked: Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart: Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.*

PSALM XCVIII.

THIS is an exhortation to praise God for the redemption he was to send his people, and to rejoice in the coming of his kingdom.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm regards Christians rather than the *Jews;* as it is only since the coming of *Jesus Christ*, that we can properly say, that God has fulfilled his promises, and *hath remembered his mercy and his truth;* and that *all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.* It is now, therefore, that men should *sing unto the Lord a new song:* Now ought his glory to be celebrated by all nations and in all places of the world, with holy transports of joy. Now, since we live in these happy times, when God reigns over us, and know that he is to judge the world in righteousness, we ought to submit to him with humility and obedience, and answer the valuable favour he has bestowed on us, in *delivering us from the power of darkness, and translating us into the kingdom of his dear Son.*

PSALM XCIX.

THIS Psalm was designed to celebrate the majesty of God, and the glory of his kingdom. It likewise mentions the mercies God had shown the *Israelites* in the time of *Moses, Aaron,* and *Samuel,* and upon divers other occasions.

Reflections.

I. HERE we learn, that it is the duty of those who have the happiness to know God, and to be the subjects of his kingdom, to fear him, to reverence his majesty, to worship him with the profoundest humility, and without ceasing, to celebrate his name, which is great, terrible, and holy. II. We see in this Psalm, that God did formerly deliver the *Israelites,* when *Moses, Aaron,* and *Samuel* called upon him; and that he also took vengeance on them for their sins, when they offended him. This shows, that as God is always good, he is also just, and has sometimes made them feel the marks of his mercy, and sometimes of his wrath, to engage them to love and fear him.

PSALM C.

ALL people are here exhorted to worship God, to praise him as their Creator, and to celebrate his goodness and truth.

Reflections.

THERE are three reflections to be made on this Psalm: I. That we ought to pray, that all nations of the world may worship the Lord, and glorify his name; and that to this end God would make himself known unto them, and give them the knowledge of his Son *Jesus Christ.* II. That if we desire to serve God in an acceptable manner, we must not do it by restraint, or with our lips only, but heartily, and with a holy joy. III. That in order to excite us to this duty, we must consider, that God is our Creator; that *we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture;*

and that he heaps his favours upon us, not only of nature, but especially of grace, and gives his Church tokens of his goodness and mercy.

PSALM CI.

David makes a vow to govern his people righteously, and chiefly to punish and drive the wicked from him, and to show favour to good men.

Reflections.

In this Psalm we see what are the duties and sentiments of good princes and good magistrates, and how they ought to conduct themselves in the government of their states. I. They ought to walk in uprightness, to abhor evil, and to apply themselves to govern their people with justice. II. It is their duty to punish the wicked and the ungodly; to drive from them proud men, slanderers, deceivers, and flatterers; and, on the contrary, to make much of upright and sincere men, protecting them, and employing them in their service. Persons in authority ought to meditate upon this Psalm for their instruction: and we ought all of us to pray to God that he would inspire those who govern the people with these sentiments; since upon that depends the happiness and tranquillity of the public, and the promoting of the glory of God.

PSALM CII.

This is a prayer of the captive *Jews*, in which they represent to God the desolation of *Jerusalem*, and their deplorable state, and beseech him to restore them. They likewise here express their trust in God, and their hope that he, who is always the same, and unchangeable in his promises as well as in his essence, would reinstate them in such a manner, that all nations should admire the happiness and glory of *Sion;* and that the posterity of the *Jews* might bless the Lord for ever.

Reflections.

THERE are two things chiefly to be considered in this Psalm: First, The sad condition of the captive *Jews*, and their extreme affliction; and secondly, their hope in God. Therefore the reading of this Psalm furnishes us with these two instructions: I. That the children of God have a tender affection for the Church, and that there is nothing which more deeply concerns them than to see it exposed to sufferings. But if the faithful are afflicted when the Church is persecuted, they are not less afflicted to see the deplorable state it is often reduced to when it enjoys peace and prosperity. II. As the ancient *Jews* firmly trusted that God would arise and take pity upon *Sion*, and restore it to its glorious state; and that he would, by delivering the *Jews* from their captivity, manifest his glory to all the kings and nations of the earth; we ought not to doubt but God will do the same thing, and even after a more illustrious manner, in favour of the Christian Church; and that the time is coming, wherein his glory and his kingdom will appear in splendour. This happy restoration is what true Christians desire above all things, and what they ask of God in most fervent prayers. This too will undoubtedly be brought to pass by the infinite power of *Jesus Christ*, since he is Lord of the world, and is over all, God blessed for ever. This St. *Paul* teaches in the first chapter of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, where he applies to the Son of God what is said of the creation of the world at the end of this Psalm.

PSALM CIII.

THIS is a Psalm of praise, in which, I. *David* blesses the Lord for all the favours he had granted him, and for what he had done for the people of *Israel*. II. He celebrates here particularly the great goodness of God towards men; the mercy he shows in pardoning their sins, and his tender and constant

love to those that fear him. Lastly, He here invites all creatures to join with him in praising the name of the Lord.

Reflections.

THIS is one of the most excellent songs of thanksgiving in the whole Book of Psalms. *David* here seems affected with the highest strains of devotion, and the most lively sense of gratitude. He here teaches us by his example to bless God, not only with our mouths, but with our whole heart, and with all the powers of our soul; to cherish the remembrance of all his mercies, and to take delight in rehearsing them, and praising him continually. The mercy of God, who, knowing that we are but dust, prophet here celebrates particularly the infinite bears with us, and does not render to us what our sins deserve; and entertains the same compassion and kindness as a father does for his children. But he teaches us, at the same time, that the divine goodness is displayed only in behalf of those that fear him and reverence him; and that his mercy extends only to them that *keep his covenant, and remember his commandments to do them.* Lastly, It appears from this Psalm, that, in order to praise God worthily, we must not only praise him ourselves, but must earnestly desire, with *David,* that he may be praised by men and angels, and by all creatures. With such sentiments as these, of zeal, love, and gratitude, we should say continually, *Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion: Bless the Lord, O my soul.*

PSALM CIV.

I. *David* adores and celebrates the majesty of God, which appears in the works of creation and providence. II. He describes the power, wisdom, and goodness, by which God preserves and governs the many creatures which the world contains. Lastly, He wishes that God may be praised and blessed for ever.

Reflections.

THE design of this Psalm is, to teach us to praise God for his marvellous works; and to this end to consider with great attention, the wonders which the world presents to our view; the many different creatures it contains, and which we see in the heavens, in the air, upon the earth, and in the waters; the regular and wonderful order that reigns among them; the manner in which God preserves and governs them; and the care which his adorable providence takes of plants and animals, and particularly, in providing for the necessities of man; since all creatures serve to the various uses and conveniences of our life. These reflections lead us to acknowledge, that God is the author of all these things; that by him alone they subsist; that as he has created them by his power, he can also destroy them by his will alone. Above all, we should remember, that if all these creatures were made for man, man was made for God, and that God has placed us in this world, and has made us capable of seeing so many wonders, and of enjoying so many different blessings, that we may know our Creator, and love him, and thank him for all his kindnesses. These sentiments of admiration, love, and gratitude, which this meditation produces in us, are in this Psalm expressed by these words: *O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; The earth is full of thy riches. The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever: The Lord shall rejoice in his works. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord.*

PSALM CV.

I. THE prophet exhorts the *Israelites* to praise God, and to celebrate his power, goodness, and faithfulness. II. He relates what God has done for their fathers, in consequence of the covenant he had made with *Abraham*. III. He recites what

had happened to the posterity of that patriarch, and particularly to *Joseph;* the arrival of *Jacob* in *Egypt;* the persecution which the people of *Israel* underwent in that country; the plagues with which God smote the *Egyptians;* their sojourning in the wilderness; and lastly, their settlement in the land of *Canaan.*

Reflections.

I. In this Psalm we see the prophet break forth into joy, and express that holy zeal which animates the faithful to praise God, and makes his mercies known to all. II. We have here a brief history of God's favours to the *Israelites,* which proves, that God has always taken care of his own people; that in all times he has wrought great wonders in their favour; and that he is faithful and constant in his covenant, and in his promises, which ought to fill us with confidence, and convince us that God will be for ever the protector of his Church, and his children. III. This hymn was designed to perpetuate among the *Israelites* the remembrance of God's mercies, and to excite their gratitude. Though these events do not directly regard Christians, yet they ought to preserve the remembrance of them, as affording matter for the most edifying and instructive meditations. But it is our duty, above all, to take occasion, from what is contained in this Psalm, to raise our thoughts to the consideration of those signal mercies and spiritual blessings which God has communicated to us, by making with us a new covenant in *Jesus Christ;* by delivering us from the captivity of sin, of the devil, and of death, and by receiving us into his church. IV. We see in the last words of this Psalm, that God showed all these mercies to the *Jews, that they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws.* This is God's design in doing good to men. His mercies naturally tend to engage us to love and fear him, and keep his commandments, which is the best way of expressing our gratitude.

PSALM CVI.

As the former Psalm gives an account of the mercies of God to the children of *Israel;* this is a relation and confession of the murmurings, and of the sins they fell into after their departure out of *Egypt*, both in the wilderness and in the land of *Canaan.* We see likewise here the several chastisements with which God visited this people, and the marks he gave them of his goodness in supporting and delivering them on many occasions.

Reflections.

To improve this Psalm to our edification, we must observe chiefly these three things. I. The confession which the *Jews* made of their sins and rebellion, and murmurings and ingratitude, and the idolatry they had several times been guilty of. From hence we may learn, on one hand, not to imitate the ingratitude and infidelity of that people, since God has conferred infinitely greater mercies on us than on them; and, on the other, to acknowledge and confess our sins before God, when we have offended him. II. We here see, that whenever the *Israelites* fell into disobedience, they felt the effects of God's wrath. God does not suffer the disobedience of men to go unpunished, but punishes the sins of those whom he has received into his covenant, and who abuse his favours, which he does, in order to recover them to their duty. Therefore, when God visits us, either with general calamities, or particular afflictions, instead of murmuring, we ought to acknowledge the justice of his chastisements, make a righteous use of them, and be afraid to draw new ones upon ourselves by the hardness of our hearts. III. It is said in this Psalm, that God in his great goodness had borne with the *Jews*, taken pity on them, and even delivered them upon several occasions. These are proofs of God's great mercy; that he is full of compassion and long-suffering to men, even to those who have offended

him, and is always ready to pardon men, as soon as they grow better by his correction, and to make them happy.

PSALM CVII.

THE design of this Psalm is to show that the providence of God exposes men to various trials and dangers, to engage them to have recourse to him, to fear him, and to celebrate his goodness. This the prophet proves by the examples of those who wander in strange countries, or are in prison, or visited with sickness, and of those that are exposed to storms and tempests upon the sea. He makes mention likewise of famine, of drought, of the humbling of great men, and exalting them of low degree; and shows, that God does all this with wisdom and justice, and for the good of mankind.

Reflections.

THIS very instructing Psalm serves to teach us, that God does wisely dispense all that happens to men; and that when they are fugitives, and dispersed, captives, sick, and in danger of perishing, afflicted with famine, or in some other manner, it is God that makes them pass through all those trials, that he may engage them to call upon him, and have recourse to his power and goodness. This Psalm, therefore, shows us, that it is the duty of persons in affliction to apply themselves to God by humble and fervent prayer for deliverance out of all their misfortunes; that when men cry to God in their distress, and turn to him, he takes pity on them, and delivers them from all their troubles; and that it is the duty of those, who, by the help of God, have escaped any great sickness, danger of death, or other afflictions, to show their gratitude to him all their lives, and to celebrate his loving-kindness before all. Those who have been in affliction should take particular notice of these things. It is very common with men, to fly to God in their sufferings; but when

the danger is over, they generally forget the divine favours and fall into ingratitude. What is said in this Psalm is very instructive, and engages us seriously to reflect upon what happens in the world, and especially to ourselves; that we may learn from thence to fear God. This is the use we ought to make of this Psalm, as we are directed in the last verse in these words; *Whoso is wise, and will observe these things: Even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.*

PSALM CVIII.

David praises God with great zeal, and implores his assistance; he likewise assures himself, that by the divine aid he should reign over the whole land of *Israel*, and should be victorious over the *Moabites*, *Edomites*, and all those who opposed him.

Reflections.

I. This Psalm should inspire us with great devotion and ardent zeal to praise God, and to celebrate his mercy and truth. II. It should fill the saints with a firm trust in the divine assistance, and convince them that those whom God loves will always be delivered. III. *David* teaches us, that all our strength and all our happiness depends on God; that human assistance is but vanity; and that therefore we ought to fix our hope in God alone.

PSALM CIX.

In this Psalm *David* describes the malice and injustice of his enemies, and threatens them with the curse of God.

Reflections.

We may learn in general from this Psalm, that as God protects good men, his curse does usually pursue the wicked, and chiefly those who oppress the innocent, who are cruel and hard-hearted, and injure others; that this curse doth even cleave to their posterity; and that the evil which they have done or wished to others, often falls upon them-

selves. But care must be taken not to pervert this Psalm in a criminal and impious manner, by imagining we are at any time allowed to wish that the vengeance of God may fall upon those who hate us and do us hurt. *David* here speaks in quality of a king chosen by God, and of a prophet. He rather foretold than desired the destruction of his enemies; he even returned them good for evil, as he himself says, and love for hatred. Besides, what is here said, regards only the enemies of God, and certain great sinners, such as *Judas*, to whom some of the words of this Psalm are applied in the New Testament. But above all, let us remember that a Christian should hate no man, and that the character we bear as disciples of *Jesus Christ*, obliges us to love all men, even our greatest enemies, to pray for them with all our heart, and to wish and to do to them all the good in our power.

PSALM CX.

THE Holy Spirit, in this Psalm, foretells that the Messiah should be exalted to the right hand of God; that he should be the king and high-priest of the Church; that he should gloriously establish his kingdom, and triumph over all his enemies.

Reflections.

Jesus Christ himself and the apostles teach us, in the New Testament, that this Psalm relates to the Messiah. We here learn the divine dignity of his person; the nature of his kingdom, which was to be spiritual and heavenly; the supreme glory to which God would exalt him, by setting him at his right hand; and the power by which he would establish his empire, by the destruction of his enemies. The Holy Spirit here likewise foretells, that the Messiah should be not only a powerful king, but also our high-priest, who should atone for our sins; as St. *Paul* proves, in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*. This Psalm teaches us further, that

those who are the subjects of this glorious king, should be a willing people, and that they would submit without restraint, willingly and joyfully obeying him. This Psalm, therefore, instructs us in our privileges and our duty. Lastly, what is here said, suffers us not to doubt but *Jesus Christ* will for ever reign over the faithful, and that he will one day tread under his feet all his and our enemies; which will be especially accomplished, when he shall destroy death, our last enemy, by a happy resurrection, as St. *Paul* remarks in the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the *Corinthians*.

PSALM CXI.

THE Psalmist praises God on account of his wonderful works, and above all, for the temporal and spiritual mercies he had bestowed on the people of *Israel*.

Reflections.

WE ought to join our praises to those which are offered to God in this song; we have even more reason than the faithful of old had, to confess that the works of God are great and wonderful; that he is merciful, righteous, and full of compassion; that he has remembered his covenant, and sent salvation and redemption to his people. These inestimable blessings should excite us to praise God continually for all these things with our whole heart, and declare his goodness and marvellous works before men, and particularly in the assembly of the faithful. *David* gives us at the end of this Psalm, a very useful and important lesson, while he tells us, that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom:* and that *all they have a good understanding that do his commandments.* This teaches us, that the fear of God is the way to attain to true wisdom and solid happiness, and therefore, that this ought to be our chief study.

PSALM CXII.

THIS Psalm contains a description of true holiness, and of the happiness of the godly.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm teaches us, what are the distinguishing characters of true piety, and how great the happiness of those is who are possessed with it. I. The character which the Psalmist gives of good men is, that they fear the Lord; that they take great delight in his commandments; that they are just and sincere; that they conduct all their affairs with uprightness; that they are kind and full of compassion, and love to give alms to the poor. II. The prophet teaches us next, that those who live thus are perfectly happy; that God blesses them in their persons, in their posterity, and in their possessions; that they enjoy peace of conscience; that they fear no evil, always trusting in the Lord; and that their righteousness and their memory shall remain for ever. These are very important instructions, which should powerfully encourage us to the study and practice of piety.

PSALM CXIII.

THIS is a Psalm of praise, and an exhortation to acknowledge and declare the glory of God, and his infinite power, which appear in the works of his Providence, and especially in his exalting and blessing those whom he delights in.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm should excite us to praise the name of the Lord, and continue to publish his glory, which appears everywhere with so much lustre; and to celebrate that adorable Providence with which he governs all things here below, and by which he exalteth and humbleth men as he pleases. These considerations

are powerful motives to engage us to fear God, to depend entirely upon him, and to put our whole trust in his mercy.

PSALM CXIV.

We have here a noble description of the power which God displayed when the *Israelites* came out of *Egypt*, when they passed the Red Sea, and when the river of *Jordan* was dried up at their entrance into the land of *Canaan*.

Reflections.

These two reflections are to be made upon this Psalm: I. That the miracles which God formerly wrought in behalf of his people, at their coming out of *Egypt*, and when they passed through the Red Sea, and over the river *Jordan*, are incontestible proofs of the power, greatness, and majesty of God; and that therefore we ought to celebrate that infinite power, and to fear that great God, whom nothing can resist. II. The next reflection is, that since the wonders mentioned in this Psalm are not so considerable as those which God has wrought for us in the work of our redemption, we have more reason than the *Jews* to exalt the power and goodness of our God, and to bless him for ever.

PSALM CXV.

This Psalm has three parts. In the first, which is a prayer, the *Israelites* beg of God to deliver them for the glory of his name. The second describes the vanity of idols, and the folly of idolaters. In the third, the Psalmist represents the happiness of those who serve and fear God, and put their trust in him.

Reflections.

This Psalm teaches us three things: I. That when God does good to men, he is led to do it, not by any merit in them, but by his own pure mercy; which ought to be the foundation of our trust, when

we direct our prayer to him. II. What is here said of the folly and stupidity of idolaters, who worship dead idols, and the works of men's hands, tended to dissuade the *Israelites* from the worship of false gods, and the more effectually to prevent their forsaking the worship of the true God. This too engages us to bless the Lord for delivering us from idolatry, by making himself known to us; and should teach us to serve him with purity, zeal, and fidelity. III. We here see how happy those are who worship God and fear him; since the Psalmist assures us, that God is the help and buckler of all those that trust in him; that they are blessed of the Lord, who has made the heavens and the earth; and that his favours are extended to them and their posterity. These glorious promises should prevail on us more effectually to fear God, and to expect all our happiness from his blessing alone.

PSALM CXVI.

David gives thanks to God with holy transports of zeal, joy, and love, for the deliverances he had granted him, and for all the good things he had received from him.

Reflections.

In this Psalm the devotion and zeal of king *David* appear with most extraordinary lustre. We should particularly here observe, with what sentiments of joy and gratitude he celebrates the wonderful deliverances, which God had vouchsafed him in the great dangers he had been exposed to; with what zeal he praises him, and vows to love and obey him. From this pious prince we learn, that when God has bestowed any particular favour on us, and especially when he has delivered us from any great danger, it is our duty to love him, to bless his holy name, to perform our vows, and praise him in the presence of all his people; and, above all, to walk before him all the days of our life; and to testify our gratitude to

him, not only by our words, but by all our actions. This is what we are in an especial manner to do for the spiritual favours he bestows upon us, when he pardons our sins, and delivers us from condemnation and death, and receives us into the number of his children and servants. The sight and sense of such inestimable blessings should fill all those who partake of them with joy and consolation, and make them say with the Psalmist: *Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord, in the presence of all his people. Praise the Lord.*

PSALM CXVII.

THE Psalmist invites all the nations of the earth to praise God because of his goodness and mercy.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm invites us to one of the most important duties of religion, which is to praise God continually for his goodness, and confess that his loving-kindness is very great towards us, and endureth for ever.

PSALM CXVIII.

David exhorts all the *Israelites* to celebrate the goodness of God. He blesses him, with great zeal, for making him triumph over his enemies. The people answer his invitations by blessing the Lord, and praying for the prosperity of *David*. The last part of this Psalm relates to our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm, as many others do, invites us to praise God, and to celebrate his goodness and mercy. *David*, being delivered from all the dangers he had been exposed to, returns most hearty thanks to God,

and invites the priests, the rulers of the people, and all the *Israelites* to join with him. We should all be animated with the same zeal; and persons of every order, rank, and condition, should unite in the discharge of this duty, and acknowledge *that God is good, and that his mercy endureth for ever.* This Psalm, which the *Jews* sung at their feasts, should be made use of by Christians in giving thanks to God, not only for the favours and deliverances, whether public or private, which he grants them; but, above all, for the coming of our Lord *Jesus Christ.* The Spirit of God signifies in this Psalm, that the Messiah should be rejected by the chief of the *Jews;* and that notwithstanding, he should become the King and Head of the Church; which was fulfilled when *Jesus Christ* was crucified, and when, after his resurrection, he ascended into heaven, and his kingdom was established in the world. Let us, therefore, celebrate the power and goodness of God, which have appeared in this wonderful work; and let the consideration of these salutary events lead us to say with *David, The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

PSALM CXIX.

THE 119th Psalm is an admirable description of the excellence of the law of God, and of the happiness of those that keep it. This Psalm is full of the most fervent and affecting devotion, interspersed with many beautiful prayers, with various strains of piety, and with a great number of excellent rules for the conduct of life; therefore the reading of it may be attended with great advantage, provided it be read with suitable attention and devotion.

PSALM CXIX. 1—32.

At the entrance of this Psalm, king *David* represents the happiness of those who keep the commandments of God. He testifies that his intention and desire is, to apply himself entirely to it, and he begs of God, with great zeal, that he would give him grace to understand his holy law, and to observe it continually.

Reflections.

From the first part of this Psalm, we learn, that man's greatest happiness consists in walking uprightly, in keeping the law of the Lord, and in seeking his testimonies with his whole heart; that by his divine law, young people, and all men in general, ought to regulate their behaviour; and that they who do so will never fall into shame or misery. These considerations engage us to choose, as *David* did, the commandments of God for our portion, to keep them in our heart, to make them the subject of our conversation, to take pleasure in them, and rejoice in the observation of them, more than if we had all the riches in the world. To secure this happiness to ourselves, let us beg of God to teach us his statutes, and open our eyes that we may see the wonders of his law; to keep us from lying and wickedness, and to make us know the way of his holy commandments, that we may walk in them with faith and perseverance to the end of our lives.

PSALM CXIX. 33—72.

David, several times, beseeches God to give him grace rightly to understand and keep his laws. He prays him to support him, by that means, under all his trials; he declares, that the word of God had strengthened and comforted him under all his misfortunes. He confesses, that it was good for him to have been afflicted, that he might learn to keep the statutes of the Lord; he protests that he will apply himself to

them more and more; that he had chosen the law of God for his inheritance; and that he valued it above all the goods and advantages of the world.

Reflections.

THE use to be made of the reading this part of the 119th Psalm, is to entertain the same pious sentiments which are here expressed, and to beg of God, with *David*, to teach us the way of his statutes; to give us understanding to know and keep them; to incline our hearts to obedience, and to turn them away from vanity, covetousness, and every evil way; to make us always sensible of the effects of his mercy, by supporting us in all dangers; and above all, that he would never deprive us of his word and grace. *David* next teaches us, that good men make an open and public profession of the fear of God, and are never tired with speaking of him and his holy laws. When they see wicked men, that blaspheme God, and insult the righteous, they abhor their impiety, and dread the judgments that threaten them; they strengthen themselves more and more in the love of God's law; they take it for their portion and inheritance; they meditate upon it day and night, and seek the company of those that fear God and keep his commandments. Lastly, From what *David* here says, we learn the usefulness of afflictions, and are led to adore the wisdom and goodness of God, who afflicts and chastises men, that they may learn to observe his word. This was the advantage *David* made of his troubles, and this taught him to prefer that divine word before all riches, and every thing in the world that is esteemed most valuable.

PSALM CXIX. 73—104.

David continues to show his zeal and love for the law of God, and begs him to enlighten and comfort him. He declares, that the law of God had been his hope in all his troubles; that he had adhered to it more and more; that he considered it as the most

perfect thing in the world; that he loved it above all things; that it afforded him all the understanding, and all the wisdom which he stood in need of; and that he found an unspeakable pleasure and sweetness in the practice of it.

Reflections.

THIS part of the 119th Psalm sets before us the great benefits which arise from the knowledge and observation of the law of God. *David's* manner of speaking shows, that those who give themselves up to it, are never confounded; and that in their afflictions they always meet with that help and comfort which is needful for them. He teaches us, that the evils which the righteous suffer, are so far from making them forsake the law of God, that they engage them to adhere to it more firmly; and that this is their support under all their trials. *David* assures us, that this law is the most perfect, and most excellent thing in the world; that those who are enlightened by this divine light, surpass the most prudent in wisdom and understanding; and that all earthly pleasures and delights are not comparable to the pleasure and sweetness we taste in the knowledge and love of the divine law. These are the sentiments which we ought all to entertain, and which we should beg God to confirm us in more and more.

PSALM CXIX. 105—144.

David still insists upon the usefulness of the law of God, and vows to observe it all the days of his life. He shows that God confounds the wicked, and all those that depart from the right way, but he is the support of those that fear him; that the righteous have nothing to apprehend from the wicked, and that no harm can happen to them. He then resumes his description of the excellence of the law of God; expresses his sincere concern to see it broken; protests he will always love it, and apply himself to it more and more; and beseeches the Lord to increase his knowledge of it.

Reflections.

THE reflections which this portion of Scripture presents us with, are, I. That the word of God is *a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths;* and that those who are enlightened by this divine light, and walk in the way which it prescribes, cannot err. II. It appears from hence, that the faithful are sincerely attached to that part of God's word which prescribes their duty, and contains the holy laws which he has given us for the conduct of our lives. They esteem it their perpetual inheritance, and make it the joy of their heart. They vow to love and obey God; saying with *David, I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments;* and they beseech God that he would give them grace to perform their vow. When they consider the impiety which reigns in the world, and the judgments of God which overtake those who forsake him, they are sincerely grieved, and full of terror and amazement; when they see others forsake God's law, they more firmly adhere to it: and whatever condition they are in, whether it be affliction or prosperity, that divine law is all their pleasure, and all their consolation.

PSALM CXIX. 145—176.

David calls God to his assistance, prays him to look upon his affliction, and to defend his cause against the great ones that persecuted him. He declares that all his desire is to keep the law of his God, to praise him and glorify him during his whole life.

Reflections.

THE instructions which this last part of the 119th Psalm suggests to us, are the following; 1. That in all our troubles we should apply ourselves to God, to ask of him, not only the deliverances we stand in need of, but above all things, grace to please and obey him. II. That the law of God should be our greatest delight, and to meditate on his divine word

the general employment of our lives. III. That God sees the sufferings of his people, and hears their prayers; but that he is far from the wicked, and will not deliver them. IV. That God has annexed a glorious reward, and perfect happiness to the observation of his law. This *David* assures us, when he says, that *there is great peace to those who love his law, and that nothing shall offend them.* The last reflection is, That we ought to dedicate our whole lives to God, desire to employ them in his service, and to the glory of his name; and beseech him to grant us all necessary assistance to this purpose. This is *David's* earnest prayer at the end of this Psalm, where he says, *Lord, let my soul live, that it may praise thee. I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant, and I will not forget thy commandments.*

General Reflections on Psalm CXIX.

THAT this Psalm may be read with improvement, it will be convenient to add to the particular reflections already made, these three principal reflections; I. That the law of God is most excellent, and its effects most wonderful. *David* teaches us, that this divine law is the most perfect; that it is a heavenly light which enlightens us; that it gives us understanding; that it purifies and rejoices the heart; that it supports us in afflictions; that it gives us unspeakable peace of conscience; and that it is infinitely better than all the treasures and riches of this world. II. In this Psalm we learn to distinguish good men. They are sincere and upright in their ways; they do that which is right; they walk in the law of the Lord, and meditate on it day and night; they love God and his word with all their heart; they abstain from evil, and from the company of the wicked; they join themselves to the righteous; they are struck with terror at the sight of God's judgments; they trust in him, and are calm and patient under afflictions. III. Lastly, This Psalm is full of many excellent prayers, which should be continually

in our mouths and in our hearts, begging God to enlighten our minds, to teach us his law, to incline our hearts to obey him; that he would take care of us, and guide us always by his Providence and his Holy Spirit. These are the instructions which this Psalm furnishes us with; for which purpose we ought to read and meditate upon it very frequently.

PSALM CXX.

THE prophet begs of God to defend him from the deceits and calumnies of the wicked; and complains that he is forced to live among them.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm teaches, I. That good men may be exposed to calumny, and the malice of men, but that God protects and delivers them. II. That it is a great affliction to good men to live among the wicked and ungodly. Lastly, That it is the character of the righteous to love peace, as it is of the wicked to be addicted to confusion and trouble.

PSALM CXXI.

THE author of this Psalm testifies, that he firmly relied on the divine assistance; and that he was fully persuaded that God would always watch for the safety of his people, and of all the faithful.

Reflections.

THE substance of this Psalm is, that our help cometh from God alone; that he watches over his Church, and over all the righteous; that he preserves them in all dangers, and that he will never forsake them. This doctrine should fill the faithful with sure confidence in God, and confirm them more and more in his fear and love.

PSALM CXXII.

David expresses the zeal and love he had for the house of God, and for the city of *Jerusalem;* he prays for the prosperity of that city, and vows to promote with all his power the glory of God, and the good of the people of *Israel.*

Reflections.

David's great zeal for the temple and city of *Jerusalem,* and for the tribes of *Israel,* and the vows he made upon that occasion, instruct princes and magistrates, and all the true members of the Church, to concern themselves for the public tranquillity, and for the good of civil society; but, above all, for religion, and for the service of God; to pray continually for the peace of the Church, and join their labours to their prayers, by doing all that is in their power for its good and edification.

PSALM CXXIII.

THE children of *Israel* being oppressed and persecuted by their enemies, implore the divine assistance.

Reflections.

THOSE who are exposed to the contempt, persecution, and cruelty of the wicked, should learn from this Psalm, to look up continually to God, that he would have compassion on them; and to place all their trust in his help; believing that God will never forsake those who serve him faithfully and suffer for his sake.

PSALM CXXIV.

IN this Psalm the *Israelites* acknowledge that God had delivered them on many occasions; and that without his protection they should have been destroyed long before.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm is still better suited to the Christian than to the *Jewish* Church. What is here said, engages us to reflect upon the different conditions the Church of *Christ* has been in; and to consider, that notwithstanding the attempts which Satan and the world have made against it, ever since its birth, it still subsists. From whence we may conclude, that God will always be its strength and support, and will never permit it to be destroyed. Thus it is with all true believers, since it is impossible God should forsake them, or cease to love them, and take care of them.

PSALM CXXV.

I. *David* describes the stedfastness of those that trust in God, and his protection of *Jerusalem*, and of the children of *Israel*. II. He says, that if good men are afflicted, it is not for ever; whereas those that forsake God perish at last in a miserable manner.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm represents to us in a few words the happy condition of those who fear God, and put their trust in him. The Psalmist teaches us, that nothing can move them; that God is always ready for their defence; that if he suffers them to be afflicted, he has regard to their weakness; and that he softens and shortens their troubles. He likewise assures us, that God always does good to the righteous, and to those that are upright in heart; whereas those who wander out of the right way, fall at last into destruction. This meditation furnishes believers with powerful motives to be for ever calm and serene, to put their whole confidence in God, and to be more strictly attached to their duty.

Library of
PITTSBURGH - XEN
THEOLOGICAL SEMIN
N.S., Pittsburgh

PSALM CXXVI.

THIS is a song of thanksgiving, in which the *Jews* rejoice at the wonderful deliverance which God had granted them in bringing them out of captivity; and they pray him to finish their restoration.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm engages us to reflect on the wonderful things which God has done in all times for his people, by delivering them, contrary to all appearance, from the power of their enemies. This Psalm assures us, moreover, that if the Church, or the righteous, are in affliction and tears, God gives them at last occasion to rejoice; and, in general, when men have been tried and humbled by affliction, he makes gladness succeed to sorrow; so that, as the *Jews* here express it, *they that sow in tears, shall reap in joy.*

PSALM CXXVII.

THIS Psalm declares, that all the care that is taken for the prosperity of cities and families is unprofitable without the divine protection; and that he in mercy gives children to those whom he designs to bless.

Reflections.

HERE we learn, I. That it is not so much the care which men take, as the blessing of God, that makes states, cities, and families subsist; and therefore that magistrates and heads of families ought to labour to bring this blessing upon them. II. That God gives children, and that we ought to esteem them a particular blessing; since if we bring them up in virtue and godliness they will be the joy and glory of their parents not only in this world, but in that which is to come.

PSALM CXXVIII.

THIS Psalm speaks of the happiness of the godly, and of the temporal blessings bestowed upon them by God, in prospering their labours, and in giving them children and a happy posterity.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm assures us, that God blesses the labour and the families of those that fear him and walk in his ways. Though the temporal blessings which were formerly promised to the *Jews*, are not the chief things which Christians ought to aspire after; yet they are to be considered as a reward of piety, and to be received with thankfulness. Godliness has the promise of the life that now is; God always blesses those families where piety prevails, and does particularly shower down upon them spiritual blessings; and at last exalts them who live in innocence to the supreme happiness which he has prepared for them in heaven.

PSALM CXXIX.

THE prophet exhorts the Church to acknowledge, that though they had been often persecuted, God had not forsaken them; and he foretells, that all the enemies of the Church should be destroyed.

Reflections.

WHAT is said in this Psalm engages us to consider, that the Church has been often assaulted, both under the Old Testament and under the New; but that God has always preserved it, and that its enemies have never been able to destroy it. This ought to confirm us in our belief, that the Church and all its true members will for ever subsist; and that all those who set themselves against them, shall have nothing but shame and confusion for their portion.

PSALM CXXX.

David here implores the mercy of God, and the pardon of his sins; and likewise expresses his confidence in the divine goodness.

Reflections.

THE Psalmist here gives us three lessons of instruction. I. That if God should examine us in the rigour of his justice, none would be found righteous before him: wherefore we ought all to have recourse to his mercy, and say with the deepest humility, *If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* II. That if God is inclined to pardon men, it is to engage them to fear him; and that without this fear there is no pardon to be expected from him. This is expressed in these words, *There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.* III. That God has always been, and ever will be, the defender of his Church and of all true believers.

PSALM CXXXI.

David protests solemnly in this Psalm, that he had not entertained proud and haughty thoughts of himself, but had always studied to live in innocence and humility.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm expresses the sentiments which all the children of God ought to entertain: They are to be humble, not aiming at high things, but resembling little children in innocence and simplicity. What *David* teaches us on this head, is the same with what our Lord more fully recommends in the Gospel, when he tells us, that if we become not as little children he will not acknowledge us for his disciples, nor shall we enter into the kingdom of heaven.

PSALM CXXXII.

I. THE author of this Psalm, which is probably *David*, here mentions the vow which that prince had made, to take no rest till the ark of the covenant was brought to *Jerusalem*, and divine service established; and he praises God that his vow had been accomplished. II. He hopes that God, according to his promises, would bless his posterity; and he prays for the priests, for the Levites, and for all the people.

Reflections.

I. THE vow mentioned in this Psalm, which *David* made to establish divine service, is a mark of his piety. From hence great men, magistrates, and all men in general, ought to learn, that the glory of God, and his true worship, is what they should desire with the greatest fervency, and procure to the utmost of their power. II. The favour God showed *David*, in enabling him to execute his pious design, shows us, that God blesses those undertakings that are formed with a good intention. III. The choice which God had made of *Sion* for the place of his worship, and the promises with which he had engaged to dwell there for ever to bless and prosper it, are to be applied to the Christian Church, in which he dwells in a more particular manner, and wherein he is to be worshipped and adored unto the end of the world. Lastly, We ought all of us, in imitation of the Psalmist, continually to pray for the preservation of the Church, for a blessing on its ministers, and for prosperity to all its members.

PSALM CXXXIII.

THIS Psalm represents the happiness of those that live in unity and peace, and the blessings which God bestows upon them.

Reflections.

THE instruction which we receive from this Psalm is, that nothing is more agreeable to God than peace and unity; and that his most valuable blessings are bestowed on those who live in good harmony with each other; which should be of great weight to incline us to live together in Christian and brotherly love.

PSALM CXXXIV.

THIS Psalm is an exhortation addressed to the ministers of the old temple, in which they are invited to praise God.

Reflections.

THE ministers of God should learn from this Psalm, that as the priests and Levites were by their office called to praise God day and night in his temple, and to pray for the people of *Israel;* so are the ministers of the Christian Church, by their office, in a particular manner, called to bless and praise continually God's holy name, and to pray without ceasing for the prosperity of the Church.

PSALM CXXXV.

I. THE prophet exhorts the Levites to praise God, to proclaim the infinite power by which he created all things; and, above all, to celebrate the wonders which he formerly wrought for his people, in delivering them out of *Egypt*, and putting them in possession of the land of *Canaan.* II. He describes the vanity of idols, and the folly of idolaters.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm engages us, no less than the *Israelites*, to bless God, and to celebrate his power, wisdom, and goodness, which appear in the creation and government of the world: and chiefly to acknowledge his mercy in choosing us to be his people. If he

delivered the children of *Israel* from *Egyptian* bondage, and destroyed the kings of *Canaan* to settle them in that country, *Jesus Christ* has done for us much greater wonders of power and love: he has destroyed the idolatry which reigned in the world; he has delivered us from condemnation and death, and admitted us into his Church. It is therefore meet and right that this Almighty and All-gracious God should be for ever praised; and that all those who fear him, especially his ministers and servants, should join together in praising him, and saying, *Blessed be the Lord who dwelleth in Sion. Praise the Lord.*

PSALM CXXXVI.

In this Psalm of praise the *Israelites* celebrate the goodness and mercy of God, as they appear in the works of the creation, and in the miracles he had wrought for them, when their fathers came out of *Egypt*, and entered into the land of *Canaan*. It must be observed, that throughout this whole Psalm the Levites and the people answered alternately, and in every verse praise God with these words, *For his mercy endureth for ever.* This form of praise was made use of at that time, and consecrated in a particular manner to praise God in the temple.

Reflections.

We are to make two reflections upon this Psalm: I. The first is, that we have as great reason to bless God as the *Jews* had, when we contemplate the wonders of creation and providence, the miracles which God formerly wrought in behalf of his people: but above all we are to praise the infinite mercy and divine power manifested in the work of our redemption. II. The next reflection relates to these words, repeated in every verse of this Psalm, *For his mercy endureth for ever;* which was a form consecrated by custom to the use of divine worship. These words teach us, that the goodness of God appears in all his works, and is

the source of all the blessings we enjoy; and therefore that we ought likewise to celebrate it with continual praises, with great gratitude, and with all the zeal and fervency we are able.

PSALM CXXXVII.

I. In this Psalm the *Jews*, in captivity at *Babylon*, express their great affliction to see themselves in an exiled condition, and their zeal for *Jerusalem*. II. The prophet foretells the destruction of the *Edomites*, who had rejoiced to see the city laid waste; he foretells likewise the destruction of the *Babylonians*.

Reflections.

The sentiments of the captive *Jews* in this Psalm are the same with those of all true believers. I. They have a great zeal for the Church; they cannot rejoice when they see it exposed to sufferings; and would rather forget themselves, and their own concerns, than forget the interest of God's glory. II. The destruction of the *Edomites* and *Babylonians*, foretold in this Psalm, which happened a few years after the destruction of *Jerusalem*, teaches us, that God revenges the evils done to his Church; and that he severely punishes persecutors, and those who join with them, as well as those who insult the miserable, and rejoice at the evil which befalls them.

PSALM CXXXVIII.

I. *David*, inspired with a holy zeal, declares that he will praise God publicly for all his favours, and invites all kings and nations to praise the Lord with him. II. He entreats God to continue to bless and protect him, and testifies his entire confidence in his assistance and promises.

Reflections.

In this hymn, the fervent zeal which animates true believers appears in a strong light; it inclines them to rejoice in God, to worship him, to sing his

praises, and declare his loving-kindness before all men, even before the great men of the earth, that they may learn to fear God, and show forth his glory. II. We see in this Psalm that the great God, who dwells in the heavens, knows all that is done here below; that he does not disdain to take care of men; but, especially, that his eyes are open upon his children; that he is with them in adversity; so that all those who fear him may say, with an entire confidence, *The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.*

PSALM CXXXIX.

I. *David* solemnly acknowledges in this Psalm that God is present everywhere; and that all, even the most secret things, are perfectly known to him. II. He praises the infinite wisdom of God, which appears in a particular manner in the formation of man; and being sensibly affected with the wonderful works of God, he declares, that the contemplation of them will always excite him to bless and fear him, and rejoice in him. Lastly, He says, that his confidence in the divine goodness and power would support him against all the assaults of his enemies, that he will never fear them, nor ever have any familiarity with them.

Reflections.

We ought to consider this Psalm with great attention. This is one of those places of Scripture, which speak most clearly of the divine presence and knowledge. *David* teaches us very expressly, that God is everywhere: that his knowledge is infinite, as well as his power; that nothing is hid from his all-seeing eye: and that wherever we are, he is witness not only of our words and actions, but even of our most secret thoughts. These truths should make a deep impression upon us, as they did upon *David*, and engage us to live always as in God's sight, and

to fear that great God, who is present everywhere, and, as nothing can be hid from him, will judge us according to our works. To this reflection, which is the principal, we must add these three particular considerations: I. That the wonderful manner in which God has given us life, affords us abundant motives to acknowledge his power and goodness, and to employ both our souls and bodies in his service. II. That the power and goodness of God ought to fill the righteous with great confidence, and secure them against all fear of men. The last reflection is, that if we love God, we shall hate every thing that God hates, we shall shun vice, and the company of the wicked, but without hating them personally; herein imitating our heavenly Father, who hates unrighteousness, but bears with sinners, doing them good continually, and using great patience towards them, to bring them to repentance.

PSALM CXL.

David entreats God to defend him from the wiles and malice of those that sought his ruin, and threatens them with the divine vengeance.

Reflections.

We are to observe, that God defends the righteous from the violence of the wicked; that his vengeance pursues cruel and unjust men, and those who slander and deceive their neighbours; that how formidable soever their power may appear, he defeats all their designs; and if he suffers the innocent to be oppressed for a while, he shows at last that he is their protector; and gives them occasion to own and celebrate his power, justice, and goodness. In this view, and with such a spirit as this, and not with a spirit of resentment and revenge against them that have offended us, ought we to read and meditate on this Psalm.

PSALM CXLI.

I. *David*, exposed to the injustice and calumny of several who persecuted him, beseeches the Lord graciously to receive his prayers. II. He begs of God grace, that he may not sin with his tongue by giving way to murmuring, and that he may not be seduced by sinners, but he desires to be reproved and corrected by the righteous; he confides in God's help, and is persuaded, that he would deliver him from them that sought his ruin.

Reflections.

THE use we are to make of this Psalm is, I. To join with king *David* in the prayers which are here offered up to God, humbly beseeching him, favourably to receive our requests, and that our prayers may ascend into his presence; that he would preserve us from offending him, either by rash words or evil thoughts; and that he would not suffer us to be drawn away by the wicked, which is the design of this excellent prayer: *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: keep the door of my lips. Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.* II. *David* teaches us to receive with pleasure and thankfulness the warnings and corrections of good men; saying with *David*, as all pious men should do, *Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil.* Lastly, We find by this Psalm, that though the condition of the righteous is sometimes miserable, yet God always preserves them, and gives them not over to the will of those who seek to destroy them.

PSALM CXLII.

David, being hid in the cave of *Adullam*, and surrounded by *Saul's* army, prays God to assist him in

that imminent danger, and vows to return him thanks and praise for so great a mercy. The history which occasioned this Psalm may be read in the twenty-fourth chapter of the First Book of *Samuel*.

Reflections.

THIS prayer, which *David* offered up to God when he was in danger of falling immediately into the hands of *Saul*, teaches us, that to the Lord we must apply for the help we stand in need of; and the deliverance which God vouchsafed him in this extremity, shows, that the confidence of the faithful is never in vain; that God never wants means to deliver them from danger, and to change their sorrow into joy and thanksgivings.

PSALM CXLIII.

KING *David* humbles himself before God, by confessing his sins; prays him to have regard to his deplorable condition, favourably to hear his prayer, to guide him by his Spirit, and to deliver him from the danger he was in.

Reflections.

I. THE prayer which king *David* makes at the beginning of this Psalm, in these words, *Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified;* is of such general use, that there is no man who has not reason to make it with humility and fervency. II. *David's* application to God in the time of trouble, teaches us, that whatever danger we are in, we ought to seek for security and comfort in prayer, and trust in God; and to this end we should meditate upon his works, and the many proofs he has given in all ages of his loving-kindness towards those that fear him. But whether we are in affliction, or in any other state, we ought, above all things, to beg of God grace to fear him, that we may feel the effects of his love and be guided by his good Spirit; offering up continually to him this prayer: *Cause me to hear thy loving-*

kindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust. Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee. Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness. Lastly, when we observe with what warmth *David* in this and many other Psalms, beseeches God to deliver him from those who hated him, we must imagine, we have not the same reasons to make that prayer as this king had; but if we have not the same reason as he had, we ought heartily to implore the divine assistance against the enemies of our salvation, since we are always liable to be assaulted by them, and they are infinitely more to be feared than our temporal enemies.

PSALM CXLIV.

THIS is a song of thanksgiving for the victories and deliverances which God had granted to *David*, and a prayer for the prosperity of the people of *Israel*. It is thought *David* composed this song after he had slain *Goliath*.

Reflections.

I. *David's* thanksgivings to God for the victories he had obtained, teach us to give glory to God for all the good things that befall us; and that it is he who protects pious kings, and, in general, all that fear him, and who delivers them from the greatest dangers. II. When God grants us any favour, we ought to add to our praises an humble acknowledgment of our own unworthiness, and say, with the most profound sentiments of humility, *Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? Or the son of man, that thou makest account of him?* III. This Psalm teaches us, that plenty, peace, and temporal prosperity, are the effects of the goodness of God and his providence; and that we ought to receive these blessings with thankfulness, and to make a right use of them. But let us remember, that these temporal blessings which the *Jews* asked of God, and which

were promised by the covenant made with them, are not the good things which Christians should chiefly look after: let us be still more sensible of the spiritual blessings which God grants us in the Church, and which secure us the enjoyment of never-ceasing happiness. A prospect of such blessings as these, gives us greater reason than the *Jews* to say, *Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.*

PSALM CXLV.

I. *David* here praises God in a manner full of zeal and love, adores his majesty and his wondrous works, but especially his goodness towards all men, and his love to those who fear and call upon him. This Psalm may be read with the greatest advantage and edification.

Reflections.

This Psalm is very proper to inflame our zeal, and to encourage us to praise God with a fervent devotion. *David* expresses, in the most affecting terms, the ravishing joys and holy zeal with which the saints meditate upon the wonderful works of the Lord, and celebrate his power, majesty, truth, and justice, and above all his goodness and mercy, which are over all his works. *David* teaches us in this Psalm, that as by the Lord all things were made, so by him all things subsist; that his providence extends even to the beasts: but his fatherly care he represents chiefly over those that fear him; assuring us that God is always near them to defend them; that he hears them when they cry unto him; that he delivers them in their distress, and grants them their heart's desire. The consideration of all these things ought to fill us with great love for so good a God, lead us to imitate his goodness, inspire us with a sincere attachment to piety, which procures these precious advantages; and animate us with ardent zeal to bless him, to declare his praises, and to glorify him for ever.

PSALM CXLVI.

THE prophet vows he will praise God all the days of his life; and teaches us to trust in God alone, who is the governor of the world, and takes a particular care of the righteous.

Reflections.

WE may learn from this Psalm, I. That the best use we can make of our lives, is to employ them wholly in praising and glorifying God's holy name. II. That it is a great folly to put our trust in princes, or in any man, since they are mortal, and therefore are mere weakness, and even as nothing; but to enjoy true happiness, we must confide alone in God, who is the Creator of the world, who loves truth and equity, does right to those that are oppressed, and delivers them; and who will reign for ever for the defence of his people and children.

PSALM CXLVII.

THE *Israelites* are exhorted to praise God on account of the works of the creation, and for the favours he had done for their nation in particular.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm presents us with two grand motives to induce us to love and praise God. I. The first, which is common to us with the *Jews*, and with all men, is taken from the power and wonderful wisdom by which he governs the world. We here see that it is God who preserves all things, who sends snow and rain, who causes the earth to bring forth its fruit, and who gives plenty and peace; and that therefore, all those temporal blessings ought to be ascribed to his bounty, and improved to his glory. II. Another cause for praising God, mentioned in this Psalm, is taken from the blessings God bestowed on the *Jews;* and particularly, in granting them, together with his protection, the peace and plenty which they

enjoyed in the land of *Canaan*, and giving them his holy word and his law. In this respect we have still stronger motives to praise the Lord, in consideration of the spiritual blessings vouchsafed to us; among which the most valuable privilege of all is, to be enlightened by the Gospel, and by the knowledge of his will. This is a favour which he has not vouchsafed to all people; and therefore we ought to acknowledge the worth of it, possessing it with thankfulness, and using it to the honour of his holy name, and to our own salvation.

PSALM CXLVIII.

David, in the transports of his zeal, invites all the creatures of heaven and earth to praise the Lord, but chiefly mankind, and the *Israelites* in particular. There is a great deal of beauty and sublimity in this Psalm.

Reflections.

In this Psalm, as well as in many others, we learn, I. That it is God who created, who preserves, and governs all the creatures that are in heaven, or upon the earth; the angels, the sun, the moon, and all the stars; that by his will, fire, hail, snow, winds, mountains, trees, and the grass, subsist in a regular order, and produce the several effects which we daily observe. II. Let us consider, that as all these creatures, except the angels, are destitute of reason, they are said to praise the Lord only as they afford us motives to praise him, by the wonders which they set before us; and, therefore, that it is man's duty to bless God, as he alone is capable of knowing him by his works. III. We see in this Psalm, that all sorts of persons are obliged to discharge this duty; that great and small, men and women, young and old, ought all of them to praise the name of the Lord. All in general, who have the happiness to live in the pale of the church, ought to signalize their zeal, and join in giving glory to

the Creator of all things; and it should be our most ardent desire, that the name of the Lord our God may be blessed and praised by us, and by all creatures both now and for ever.

PSALM CXLIX.

THIS is a Psalm of praise and thanksgiving, for the victories which the people of *Israel* had gained over several kings, by the divine assistance.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm should stir up all the true members of the Church, to sing and publish the praises of God, and to rejoice in him continually. And as the *Israelites* sung hymns of joy, because God had made them triumph over their enemies, and the kings that waged war with them; we ought likewise to praise him for the care he has taken of his Church, and for all the favours we have received from him; but chiefly, for subduing our spiritual enemies, and putting it in our power to triumph over them ourselves, and to be in all things "more than conquerors through *Jesus Christ* our Lord."

PSALM CL.

THE Psalmist exhorts all men to praise God, because of his glorious majesty and his wonderful works, and to make use of holy instruments for that purpose. This concludes the whole Book of Psalms.

Reflections.

THIS Psalm, which is the last of all, should inspire all of us with a holy zeal to praise, without ceasing, the majesty of God, his infinite power, and all his adorable perfections. This ought all of us to do, not only with our lips and voice, but chiefly with the heart; remembering, that if the *Jews* in their worship made use of musical instruments, and many other ceremonies, God requires us to praise him and worship him, under the Gospel, chiefly with the

heart, and with all possible zeal and affection. Let us, all our lives, discharge so just and pleasing a duty; and let us, to this end, make a good use of the many noble exhortations and divine patterns of devotion contained in the *Book of Psalms;* that after we have praised and glorified God upon earth, we may glorify him eternally in the heavens with all the blessed spirits. *Amen.*

The end of the Book of Psalms.

THE

PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.

ARGUMENT.

This Book of Proverbs, which has king Solomon for its author, consists of two parts: I. *The nine first chapters, which is the first part, contain the exhortations, instructions, and advices, which Wisdom dictates to mankind.* II. *The other part, which begins at the tenth chapter, is a collection of Proverbs and moral Sentences, upon all manner of subjects. It appears that Solomon wrote the first twenty-four chapters: The sentences of that prince, contained in the succeeding chapters, were collected together about* 280 *years after, in the time of king Hezekiah. The two last chapters seem to have some other author. The sentences of this Book are short, their style figurative, after the manner of the Eastern Writers; but their meaning is of the greatest importance, as they furnish us with excellent instructions upon every kind of duty, and suited to all persons and conditions.*

CHAPTER I.

THE first chapter contains three parts: I. A preface, which shows the design of this Book, with an exhortation to acquire wisdom. II. A warning to shun wicked men, and not to suffer ourselves to be seduced

by them. III. An invitation which Wisdom addresses to sinners, in order to their conversion, with severe threatenings against those that harden their hearts, and refuse to be converted.

Reflections.

THERE are three things in this first chapter, which demand our particular attention. I. We are to observe, that the chief design of this Book, is to teach men prudence and understanding, and enable them to attain true wisdom, which consists in the fear of the Lord; that this is what all young people especially ought chiefly to apply themselves to; and that this heavenly wisdom is attended with every blessing and advantage. These considerations should dispose us to improve by the instructions contained in this Book. II. *Solomon* teaches us, that in order to arrive at true wisdom, we should shun wicked men, and those who seek the hurt of their neighbours, lest they should draw us into evil by their solicitations, and by their examples, and we should be involved in the miseries that threaten them. III. We ought to hearken seriously to that wise and grave remonstrance which Wisdom, at the end of this chapter, addresses to sinners, who, like fools, err from the right way. We here see very plainly, that God seeks sinners, and makes them hear his voice: that he omits nothing to withdraw them from evil; and that he is ready to give them his grace and Holy Spirit; that he does not forsake them till after they have despised his counsels, and abused his patience; after which it is no longer time for them to have recourse to his mercy. This sets the goodness and justice of God in a clear light, and shows that men may be happy if they will; and that if they are not, their perdition proceeds from themselves; and therefore, that they ought to hearken to the voice of God, and to the wholesome instructions he gives them, and make good use of his long-suffering, and proffers of mercy, before it be too late.

CHAPTER II.

Solomon exhorts us, above all things, to labour for the attainment of true wisdom. I. He shows, that it is the most valuable thing in the world, and that God gives it to those who seek it sincerely. II. He teaches us, that they who seek after wisdom, and attain it, are filled with good, and are secured from temptation; but that they who depart from it to follow evil, and particularly such as give themselves up to impurity, hurry themselves into the greatest miseries.

Reflections.

THE instructions which *Solomon* here gives us are, I. To hearken to the words of wisdom, to be attentive to its counsels, to seek it with all our heart; that, in order to attain it, we are to beg it of God, who is the author and fountain of it; that it is not hard to attain, and that God gives it to all who sincerely desire it. II. This chapter sets before us the advantages which accrue from the possession of this divine wisdom; it communicates the knowledge and prudence we stand in need of, procures peace and tranquillity, preserves from all evil, and particularly from the evil of temptation. By wisdom we may avoid the snares of the wicked, need not fear the effects of their malice, nor are we in danger of perishing with them. Lastly, *Solomon* teaches us, that one of the advantages which wisdom procures to mankind is, that it prevents them particularly from falling into uncleanness, and preserves them from those miseries which men who follow sensuality, and the inordinate desires of the flesh, are exposed to.

CHAPTER III.

I. *Solomon* exhorts men to follow the instructions of wisdom, to fear God, to trust in him, to honour him, and to submit to his corrections. II. That prince next describes the excellence of wisdom, and the great

happiness it procures. Lastly, he exhorts us to do good to all, to hurt nobody, and to walk uprightly.

Reflections.

On this chapter, we are to consider, in general, the grave and affecting exhortations which *Solomon* here addresses to mankind, and his description of the happiness of those who give themselves up to the guidance and direction of wisdom. On this head he informs us, that he who fears God, and departs from iniquity, is more happy than if he possessed all the treasures, and every thing that the world esteems at the highest rate; that wisdom makes men enjoy the most exalted pleasures, gives length of days, and is a spring of life and blessing; that with it we need fear no evil, but may walk securely, rising up and lying down without terror, having God always for our protector. Besides this, *Solomon* here recommends many particular duties: such are, I. To trust in God, and not in our own wisdom. II. To look up to God in all our ways, to fear him, and to depart from evil. III. To honour God by a holy and religious use of our substance, and of all the temporal advantages he confers on us. IV. To submit to his corrections, remembering, that *whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.* V. Never to do an unjust action, or injure your neighbour, or to go to law with him without reason or necessity; but, on the contrary, to delight in doing him good, never deferring our assistance when we have it in our power. The last duty is, not to envy the wicked; and to remember, that they who walk not uprightly are an abomination to the Lord, and that this curse is in their houses; whereas God always blesses them that live in uprightness.

CHAPTER IV.

I. *Solomon* continues to exhort men to the study of wisdom, and to show that it brings true glory and happiness to those who apply themselves to it. II. He

warns men to shun the company of the wicked, and their evil examples, and to follow constantly the rules of piety and justice.

Reflections.

ALL, especially young people, find in this chapter very wholesome lessons, and powerful motives to lay hold of the instructions which are here given them, to form in them a habit of piety and virtue. *Solomon* exhorts us to esteem and love wisdom, and to labour above all things to acquire and keep it, assuring us that this makes men happy, and raises them to the highest pitch of glory. He teaches us moreover, that, in order to attain true wisdom, it is highly necessary that we avoid the company and allurements of the wicked, since the ways they take lead to death. Lastly, He charges us to attend to the divine instructions of wisdom, to have them always before our eyes, to keep our heart from every thing that may corrupt or seduce it, and so to order our actions, our discourses, and all our ways, that we may never turn away from the right path.

CHAPTER V.

THIS chapter contains exhortations to shun the irregular desires of the flesh, and to abstain from uncleanness.

Reflections.

ON this chapter it must be remarked, that, among other wholesome advice given unto men, wisdom recommends in a very particular manner, to abhor uncleanness, and to shun persons who live in debauchery. *Solomon* speaks of the strange woman, because as the nations bordering on the land of *Israel* lived very dissolute lives, the *Israelites* were in great danger of being seduced by women coming from those countries. He exhorts men very strenuously, and young men particularly, to avoid all such persons: he sets before them the folly and stupidity of

those who suffer themselves to be seduced by sensual pleasures, the miseries they are exposed to, and the injuries they do themselves; reminding them, above all, that the actions of men are all exposed to God's view; and that he examines all their steps. These considerations, added to the many other motives which the Gospel furnishes us with, ought to inspire us with the greatest abhorrence of impurity. They teach us that wisdom and piety cannot dwell in a heart enslaved by this passion; that we ought with all possible care to avoid the temptations, opportunities, and objects, which might raise loose desires; and endeavour to be pure and chaste, both in body and spirit.

CHAPTER VI.

I. *Solomon* advises not to be too hasty to enter into suretyship for any one with a stranger. II. He exhorts us to avoid idleness, of which he represents the fatal consequences: and to abhor malice, pride, cruelty, and lying. III. He charges us to abstain from uncleanness, and to abhor those sins which it draws men into.

Reflections.

On this chapter we are to consider, I. That the advice which *Solomon* gives, not to become surety for another, does not mean, that we should never be bound for any person whatever; but this prudent maxim means only, that no one should rashly engage for another; and that the *Israelites*, in particular, were to beware of being bound for others with strangers. This was founded upon God's command, that the *Israelites* should not have any particular dealings with the neighbouring nations, and because such suretyship occasioned several inconveniences. II. We ought to remember well what the Wise Man saith of idleness, and of the great mischiefs that attend it; and above all we ought to avoid it, because it corrupts the mind and the heart, and leads us into temptation and into sin. III. *Solomon* has

taught us, that God hates the proud and haughty, deceitful, and cruel men; those who contrive mischief, who bear false witness, and sow division by evil reports. Since those who are guilty of those sins are an abomination to the Lord, we ought utterly to abhor them, and remember that they would be much more abominable in us than they were in the *Jews*. IV. Young men are here exhorted to follow the good instructions of their fathers and mothers, and never to forget them. Lastly, The curses denounced in this and the following chapter, against adulterers and unclean persons, prove, that the divine vengeance pursues them in a particular manner, and experience confirms the truth of these threatenings; but what the Gospel says of these odious sins should affect us still more, as it leaves not the least room to doubt but God will very severely punish those who give way to them.

CHAPTER VII.

THIS chapter contains exhortations to follow the rules and maxims of wisdom; and, particularly, to study to be chaste, and not to suffer ourselves to be seduced by impure and immodest persons.

Reflections.

THE frequent warnings of the Wise Man, from the beginning of this Book, to guard men against impurity, show, that this sin is utterly inconsistent with wisdom and the fear of God; and that none, but those who are destitute of prudence and piety, can give any way to it; but that persons truly wise avoid the snares of sensuality. We find in this chapter, that the impure and unclean are luxurious and impudent, dissolute in their lives, and fond of pleasures and finery. *Solomon* shows, that we cannot too studiously avoid persons of this character; and that those who are drawn away by the lusts of the flesh, are like brute beasts which have no understanding, and hasten to their own destruction. These warn-

ings will have still greater force, if we consider, that besides the miseries which uncleanness exposes men to in this life, it hurries them into a state most fatal to the soul, and to their eternal welfare; and we should attentively weigh the declarations of the Gospel on this head, which are still more express than those of *Solomon*.

CHAPTER VIII.

I. The Divine Wisdom invites men to receive her instructions, and lay hold of the advantages which she offers to them. II. She declares that she was with God from the beginning; and by her he finished all his works, and governs the world; that she greatly blesses those who follow her instructions; and that those who reject her make themselves miserable.

Reflections.

We here see, I. God's great goodness and particular care in calling all men, without exception, even sinners, to receive instruction, in withdrawing them from the follies and errors of the world, and communicating to them true wisdom. By thus preventing them, and doing every thing that is necessary to make them happy, God shows, that if they do not arrive at wisdom and happiness, it will be wholly their own fault. II. In this chapter we learn, that Divine Wisdom is the most excellent thing in the world; that she has always been with God; that the world was made by her; and that by her all things subsist in the order wherein we see them; that she sets up kings, and gives them the prudence they stand in need of; and that this wisdom, which was with God before the creation, has been made manifest to render men happy. This was in an especial manner fulfilled when the Son of God came into the world, and declared to men the doctrine of salvation; and this ought to induce us the more to make a good use of the instructions that are given us in the Gospel. Lastly, *Solomon* teaches us, that this

heavenly wisdom is communicated only to those that love her, and desire to receive her; that in order to find her, we need only to desire and seek her; that she cannot dwell with pride and disorderly passions; that those who hearken to her are perfectly happy; but that such as reject her wrong their own souls, and wilfully engage in the ways of death.

CHAPTER IX.

WISDOM proposes, under the similitude of a feast, the good things she bestows upon men; exhorts them to receive her instructions, and warns them to avoid the temptations by which the foolish and abandoned woman draws away silly men.

Reflections.

THERE are three reflections to be made on this chapter: I. That since wisdom invites men, with so much earnestness and tenderness, to the enjoyment of her good things, we ought to improve her gracious invitation, renouncing the errors of the age, and sincerely applying ourselves to the study of true wisdom, which consists in the fear of God, and which will bring us to an eternity of happiness and glory. II. It must be observed, that these wholesome counsels of wisdom are not received by all alike; that wise men hearken to them with pleasure, and improve them; but that worldly and profane men make a mock at them, and only take occasion from them to grow wicked. III. This chapter shows us, that it is one of the greatest follies and most dangerous errors to suffer ourselves to be allured by the charms of voluptuousness; and that we cannot stand too much upon our guard against this temptation, since it is so fatal in its consequences to those who give way to it. This king *Solomon* himself is a melancholy example of, who was by women led into idolatry in his old age.

CHAPTER X.

HERE the Proverbs, or wise sentences of *Solomon*, begin. Those contained in this chapter relate to the duty of children; to ill-gotten goods; to the happiness of the righteous, and the unhappiness of the wicked; to charity, and the love of peace; to wisdom in discourse; to the advantage of corrections; to slandering; to the fault of speaking too much; to the benefit of conversing with wise men; to the destruction of the wicked, and to the firm and certain condition of the righteous.

Reflections.

THE reflections to be made on this chapter are the following: That the greatest happiness of fathers and mothers is, to have wise children; that goods gotten by injustice, fraud, or extortion, never last long; that the blessing of God, which alone is true riches, always rests upon the upright; that he who walks in integrity, walks securely, but that they that depart from the right way shall never prosper; that we should avoid quarrels; and that charity covers other men's faults. Besides this, we learn in this chapter, that we ought to be very prudent and discreet in discourse; that it is a great fault to talk too much; that great talkers seldom fail of falling into lying, slandering, and other sins: *Solomon* tells us likewise, that what the wicked fear, befals them; that at last they come to ruin; but that God grants the righteous what they desire; that the fear of the Lord prolongs life, and renders it happy; that the hope of the righteous shall be gladness, and that they shall never be moved. These are most certain truths, and maxims of very great use, which we ought to have continually before our eyes.

CHAPTER XI.

THE subjects treated of in this chapter, are injustice and deceit, pride, integrity, the vanity of riches,

the death of the wicked, the evils they occasion in the world, and the good which upright men do in it; sincerity and discretion; the fruits of righteousness; the punishment of the wicked; the woman without virtue; covetousness, usury, and the folly of those that trust in their riches; and, lastly, what befals good and bad men in this world.

Reflections.

WHAT we learn in this chapter is as follows: I. That God abhors deceit and injustice, and that we ought inviolably to adhere to integrity and uprightness, both in our words and actions. II. That pride is attended with shame, whereas humility leads to glory. III. That the wicked do much mischief in the world, and when they die their hopes perish; but that the righteous procure great happiness to cities and states, and that their happiness is always immoveable. IV. That wise men avoid slander and tale-bearing, and are prudent in their discourses; but that great evils happen both to public and private persons, for want of prudence and good counsel. V. That sooner or later the wicked will be punished. VI. That a virtuous woman ought to be esteemed: but a woman without virtue deserves contempt. VII. That it is a great folly to love riches, and to put our trust in them; and particularly, that those who rejoice in times of scarcity and dearth, and take advantage from it to enrich themselves, shall be accursed. And lastly, That if even the righteous man is exposed to afflictions in this world, the sinner shall not escape divine vengeance, but shall infallibly receive what he has deserved.

CHAPTER XII.

THIS chapter contains sentences concerning correction, and the usefulness of it; the divine blessing on good men, and the punishment of the wicked; concerning virtuous women, prudence, modesty, humanity, sloth, sincerity, the prosperity of the righteous,

and the happiness of those that give themselves up to fraud and injustice.

Reflections.

We are to learn from hence, I. To love instruction and correction; and always to follow that which is right, since that procures the divine favour. II. What is here said of the worth of prudent and virtuous women, warns Christian women of their duty. III. *Solomon* charges us to live modestly, and not to affect grandeur and show; to avoid cruelty and inhumanity; to be diligent and industrious; to abhor fraud and deceit, and never to wrong any one; to be prudent and sincere in our words; to love peace and to procure it; and constantly to follow justice and the fear of God, that being the way that leads to life. These are maxims of the greatest importance, which we ought to practise, not only because they may contribute to our happiness in this life, but chiefly because they are in themselves right, and in keeping them we do what is acceptable to God, and procure his favour.

CHAPTER XIII.

The lessons of instruction in this chapter regard prudent children, sincerity and caution in our words and actions, diligence and labour, modesty, pride, goods unjustly gotten, the advantage of hearing the instructions of the wise, good and bad company, the necessity of correcting children, and the blessing that attends good men.

Reflections.

This chapter contains divers sentences; the chief of which tend to inform us, how profitable it is to young people to be reproved and instructed; how important it is to be sincere, and at the same time prudent and reserved in our words; the great advantages of diligence and humility; and, on the contrary, the evils that proceed from sloth, negligence, and pride;

the curse that follows goods unjustly gotten; the advantage we reap from the company of persons fearing God, and the danger of frequenting the company of the wicked. Lastly, *Solomon* teaches us, that God blesses the substance and posterity of the upright; and those who love their children ought to chastise them betimes; that the righteous shall see the accomplishment of their wishes, and enjoy solid peace; but that misery will be the portion of sinners who depart from their duty.

CHAPTER XIV.

THIS chapter treats about virtuous women, uprightness, prudence, false witness, wisdom, and the blindness of men in judging of themselves; of false joy, credulity, wrath, liars; of imprudence; despising the poor, and respect paid to the rich; of compassion towards the miserable; of sincerity, the effects of the fear of God, of meekness, and of what occasions the happiness or unhappiness of kingdoms.

Reflections.

AMONG the reflections which this chapter suggests, these particularly deserve our attention. Here we learn, that women do much good or much harm in families; that the mark of a man who fears God, is to walk in uprightness; that we ought always to speak in truth, and with prudence, and to avoid insincerity, lying, and imprudence, in our discourse; that men are apt to be deceived, and to think themselves in the right way, when they are in the road to destruction; that the joy of the wicked ends in sorrow and misery; that credulity, as well as wrath and envy, make men fall into many faults; and that it is great wisdom to be meek and moderate; that rich men are usually honoured, but that poor and mean men are neglected and despised; that it is affronting God to despise the poor, but he that has compassion on them honours the Lord; that where the fear of God is, there is a

spring of life, a firm assurance, and a preservative against the snares of death. Lastly, That justice and uprightness are the true glory of kings, and the greatest security of states; but, on the contrary, injustice becomes their shame and misery.

CHAPTER XV.

THE Wise Man makes mention of meekness and prudence in our words; of the knowledge God has of the behaviour of all men; of the prayers of the righteous, and those of the wicked; of the manner in which the wise and the foolish receive corrections; of joy and contentment of mind; of a mean estate; of wrath; of idleness; of wise children; of the destruction of the proud and unjust; and of the happiness of men of integrity and humility.

Reflections.

FROM this chapter we may gather, that meekness and discretion in words produce much good; that God knows and examines the conduct and the hearts of all, both good and bad men; that instructions and corrections are very useful; that wise men receive them willingly; but that it is a sure mark of folly and blindness not to be able to endure them; that God blesses the righteous and hears their prayers, but rejects those of the wicked; that joy and content is the greatest blessing of our lives, when joined with piety; that a little, with the fear of God, and with peace, is better than riches that bring trouble and wickedness along with them; that anger and idleness are attended with fatal consequences; that wise children are a comfort to their parents; that God destroys the impious and the proud; that the family of those who love dishonest gain shall come to ruin; but that God prospers those that fear him, and do righteously, and walk humbly before him.

CHAPTER XVI.

Solomon shows, that God knows and directs the actions and thoughts of men; that in him we ought to put our trust; that he does every thing with wisdom; that he forgives sins; and that those who turn to him and fear him, obtain his favour; that we ought to possess nothing unjustly; and that God hates pride and injustice: he treats likewise of the power and duty of kings, of the worth of wisdom, of pride and humility, of prudence, of labour, of evil speaking, of an honourable old age, of moderation, and of casting lots.

Reflections.

THE lessons of instruction which the Wise Man here gives us, are, I. That God knows the hearts of men; and in him alone we ought to place our trust; that he disposes all things with profound wisdom and perfect justice; and that the miseries and calamities of the wicked are an effect of his justice. II. That from God we may obtain pardon of sin, and a reconciliation, provided we have recourse to him by repentance, and fear him, and depart from evil. III. That since *a little with righteousness is better than great revenues without right;* and *pride goeth before destruction;* we cannot too studiously avoid injustice, deceit, and haughtiness. IV. *Solomon* exhorts those that are exalted above others, to hate injustice, to love virtue, and upright men, and to make a good use of their authority. V. He exhorts us to apply ourselves to the study of true wisdom, and of the fear of God, since that is more worth than all the riches in the world; to be prudent, meek, moderate in our discourse and actions; and to abstain from slander, malice, and wrath. VI. He teaches us, that a virtuous old age is very honourable, and that this blessing is usually bestowed by God on the godly. Lastly, He declares that God presides over the lot, which plainly proves that he knows every thing; that he directs all things by his providence; and that nothing happens in the world but by his will.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE sentences in this chapter relate to concord, the fidelity of servants, the knowledge God has of men's hearts, the contempt of the poor, the blessing of families, the aversion that judges ought to have to lying, to taking bribes, and to injustice; others relate to reproofs, to folly, ingratitude, and quarrels; others speak of the excellence of friendship, of the misfortune of having wicked children, of joy and sorrow, of discretion in speaking, and of silence.

Reflections.

WE may learn from this chapter, I. That there are three things necessary in order to make any family happy; namely, peace, faithful servants, and children brought up in virtue. II. That God searches and examines the hearts of men, which is a powerful motive to godliness. III. That to despise the poor, and to rejoice at the evils which befal other men, is a sin against God, and exposes us to his wrath. IV. That magistrates and judges ought to have a strong aversion against lying and deceit, against bribes and unrighteous judgments. V. That tale-bearers sow division; but that seasonable reproofs are very useful. VI. That ungrateful persons, and those that return evil for good, shall never be blessed. VII. That quarrels ought to be carefully avoided. VIII. That one of the greatest blessings we can enjoy in this world is to find true friends. IX. That since joy makes life happy, and sorrow and vexation render it irksome, we ought to apply ourselves to the fear of God, which alone can give true contentment and satisfaction. Lastly, That one of the chief effects of wisdom is to speak with discretion, and to know when to hold our tongues. Every one of us, according to our condition and circumstances, should meditate upon these precepts, and conform our actions to them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Solomon speaks of people's interfering with things which do not concern them; of prudent and grave discourse; of respect of persons in judgment; and of taking bribes. He talks likewise of quarrels, and the care which ought to be taken to put an end to them; of idleness and flattery, and of trust in God; of pride, and the destruction that attends it; of rash speaking and judging; of the desire of the wise to receive instruction; of law-suits; of the good and evil occasioned by the tongue; of virtuous women; of pride on account of riches; and of the care which ought to be taken to preserve true friends.

Reflections.

In this chapter king *Solomon* teaches us to use a great deal of prudence in our words and actions; to seek the conversation of wise men, and improve by their instructions; to exercise justice; to put an end to disputes, and procure peace with all possible care; not to hearken to flatterers, nor take pleasure in their discourse; and to shun idleness. The Wise Man informs us likewise, that the name of the Lord is a sure refuge for the righteous; when men are puffed up with pride, their ruin is not far off; that very great mischiefs are occasioned by rash words; and, in general, that much good and evil proceed from the tongue. This chapter warns judges in particular not to respect persons, not to take bribes, and to judge righteous judgment. Here we see, lastly, that a prudent woman is one of the greatest blessings God can grant in this life; and that we cannot set too great a value upon faithful and virtuous friends. When we read these several sentences of *Solomon*, we should not consider them barely as prudent rules and maxims, which tend to make men happy in this life, and prevent many temporal inconveniences; but we ought to look upon them as means of pleasing God, and procuring his love and

approbation: and this ought to be our principal view in the observation of them.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE sentences of this chapter relate to the judgment which wise men form of others, on account of their poverty and riches, and the notions which the generality of mankind conceive of them on the same account: Other sentences relate to imprudence, to false witnesses, to the exaltation of unworthy persons, to the care which ought to be taken in suppressing anger, and to the wrath of kings: Others represent the good and evil that is occasioned by women, and by children: the reward of charitable persons; the duty of correcting children; the evils arising from anger, idleness, and being without the fear of God; the advantages of piety; the punishment and miseries which wicked men draw upon themselves.

Reflections.

THE reflections we should here make are, I. That a poor man, who walks in his integrity, is more valuable than a rich man without virtue; and therefore that we ought not to esteem men because they are rich, nor despise others for the meanness of their condition. II. It is of great importance to behave with prudence in all things. III. That false witnesses will not escape unpunished. IV. That it is a great misfortune when mean and unworthy persons are put in authority. V. That to know how to pardon injuries, and to moderate our anger, is the effect of great wisdom. VI. That women and children contribute much to the happiness or misery of families; and that we must correct our children betimes, without being withholden by a false tenderness. This chapter teaches us likewise, that *he who gives to the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and God will pay him again;* that wrath and idleness are the occasion of many evils; that the true way to be happy to the end of our lives, is to keep the commands of God,

and to fear him; and lastly, That the advantages of correction are great; that we ought to submit to it willingly; and that those who reject it, and laugh at instruction, lay up for themselves the greatest miseries.

CHAPTER XX.

Some of the maxims contained in this chapter relate to excess in wine, to kings and their wrath, to law-suits and sloth; others represent the praises given to virtue, the happiness which the posterity of the righteous enjoy, the corruption of men, God's aversion to injustice, the natural disposition of children, and the price of wisdom; others speak of slanderers, of rebellious children, of revenge, of goods unjustly gotten, of sacrilege, of breaking vows, of the security of states, and the true glory of young and old.

Reflections.

Solomon here recommends us to avoid drunkenness and intemperance, lest we fall into quarrels and other disorders, which are the consequences of it; to reverence kings; to abstain from law-suits; not to give way to sloth, nor to content ourselves with praising virtue, but to practise it also. He teaches us, moreover, that the posterity of good men are happy and blessed; that nobody can boast that he is altogether pure and free from sin; that false weights, false measures, and all sorts of fraud, are an abomination to the Lord. He shows us too, that the good or bad disposition of men is discovered from their most tender age; and that therefore we ought to take a particular care of the education of children from the very beginning; that indulging ourselves in too much sleep is not consistent with virtue; that true wisdom is but seldom to be found; that we should avoid the company of slanderers and tale-bearers; that a curse attends disobedient children, as well as ill-gotten riches; and that we ought never to return evil for evil. Lastly, We may gather from hence, that it is a great sin to commit sacrilege, and not to perform our vows; that

righteous government is the happiness of a nation; that young people ought to make a good use of the strength and vigour of their age; and that old age is honourable, when it is accompanied with virtue.

CHAPTER XXI.

We see in this chapter, that the hearts of kings, and of all men, are in the hands of God; and that nothing is more pleasing to him than uprightness. *Solomon* speaks here of pride, of riches acquired by injustice, of quarrelsome women, of hardness of heart towards the miserable, of presents, of the pleasure which good men take in doing good, of the lovers of wine and good cheer, of the fruits of piety and wisdom, of slothful persons, of the covetous, of the worship which the wicked pay to God, of false witnesses, and of the infinite power of the Lord.

Reflections.

This chapter engages us to make the following reflections: That the hearts of kings, and of all are in the hands of God, and that he is the judge of all their thoughts; that to do that which is right and just, is more acceptable to God than any sacrifice; that he severely punishes the proud; that those who get riches by evil means, labour for their own destruction; that women should avoid wrangling and disputes, and put on a spirit of meekness; and that he who is hard-hearted to the poor, shall not be heard in the day of his calamity. We may moreover from hence observe, that the righteous discharge their duty with pleasure, but that it is very painful to the wicked; that it is dangerous to love wine and good cheer; that he who addicts himself to piety, and the study of wisdom, finds life and glory; that covetous and slothful men torment themselves with vain wishes; but that the righteous live contented, and love to give; that the prayers of the wicked are an abomination; and,

lastly, that there is neither wisdom nor counsel that is able to resist God; and that he is the protector and deliverer of those that trust in him.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE sentences we are now going to read are concerning a good reputation, the providence of God, meekness, piety, the education of children, and the necessity of correcting them betimes; charity, the destruction of the wicked, sloth, the oppression of the poor, the care we should take to improve by instructions, the duty of princes and magistrates, anger, land-marks, and diligence.

Reflections.

FROM this chapter we may draw the following instructions: That a good reputation is a blessing which we ought by all means to endeavour to acquire and to preserve; particularly, that we may edify others by it; that God is equally the maker of the rich and poor; and that he has made a difference in the conditions of men, for the good of society; but that he will judge them all; that meekness, and the fear of God, compose the whole happiness of man; that it is extremely important to give children a good education, the fruits of which appear through their whole lives, and to correct them early; that God blesses those who help the poor; that he takes in hand the cause of the oppressed, and makes those who trample upon them fall into misery; that it is a very advantageous and agreeable thing, to hear and follow the counsels of wisdom, and altogether worthy of those who govern the people; that we should shun the company of angry people, and take care to do nothing dishonest; and that labour and diligence procure great advantages to men. These rules are of very great use in order to make men live happily in this world; but, above all, remember, they are the indispensable duties which religion and conscience

require of us, which should be our chief motive to make them the rule of our conduct.

CHAPTER XXIII.

In this chapter the Wise Man teaches us to be sober, not to desire riches, nor accept a present from an envious or covetous man; to be prudent in our discourses, and just in all our actions, particularly to the poor and fatherless; to correct our children; not to envy the wicked; to fly from drunkards and debauchees; to honour our father and mother; to search after wisdom and truth; and to avoid impurity and intemperance.

Reflections.

The principal instructions we meet with in this chapter, are, to be sober, and not dainty, in eating and drinking; not to desire riches, but consider that they are perishing and transitory; to receive nothing from the covetous, or of those that give with an evil heart; to be circumspect in words; not to remove the bounds of men's possessions, nor to do any injury to the poor, remembering that they have a Protector in heaven who will plead their cause. The Wise Man next recommends the chastising of children, and not being too indulgent to them; never to envy the prosperity of the wicked, but to give ourselves to the fear of the Lord; to avoid the company of drunkards and intemperate persons, lest we fall into the same misery with them. Children ought to learn particularly from hence always to honour their parents, and not to despise them when they are old. *Solomon* again reminds us, that there is nothing we ought to attain or preserve with greater care than truth and wisdom. Lastly, What we read at the end of this chapter should, in the most powerful manner, dissuade us from drunkenness and impurity, not only for fear of the miseries which these sins expose men to in this world; but espe-

cially on account of the evil of so doing, and the punishment which these sins will meet with from God in the life to come.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THIS chapter contains sentences concerning envy; the care of getting wisdom and prudence; the obligation we are under to defend them who are oppressed; the fear of God's judgments: the divine protection of good men in affliction is likewise here treated of, together with the love of our enemies, the end of the ungodly, and the little reason we have to envy them; the fear of God; the honour due to kings; impartiality in judgments; economy, revenge, and sloth.

Reflections.

THE effect which the reading of this chapter ought to produce in us, is to teach us never to envy the wicked, nor join ourselves to them; to make it our chief care to get wisdom; to comfort and defend the afflicted; and to fear the judgment which God has threatened against those who have no pity on them. The Wise Man next teaches us, that if the righteous often fall into affliction, the Lord delivers them; which is the meaning of this sentence, *A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again:* for *Solomon* did not mean, that the most righteous man falls seven times a day into sin, as several do falsely explain it. It appears from this chapter, that a wise man, and one that fears God, never rejoices at the evil that befals his enemies, nor is jealous at the prosperity of the wicked. He fears God, and honours his superiors; he lives peaceably, without meddling in things that do not concern him; he has no respect to men in the exercise of justice, and renders to every one exactly what is his due; he never returns evil for evil, and abstains from revenge; he is prudent and industrious, and guards against idleness and sloth, not only because they are attended with poverty and many evils, but, above all, because

they are an obstacle to virtue, and corrupt the heart. The Gospel prescribes the same rules and in a more perfect manner, which lays us under a still greater obligation not to depart from them.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE Wise Man makes several remarks on the greatness and duty of kings; on humility, quarrels, secrecy, words spoken in season, and reproofs. He proposes rules concerning liberality, meekness, temperance; the correspondence we ought to maintain with our neighbours; the care we should take to comfort the afflicted; the love of enemies, and the way to restrain slanderers. Lastly, He speaks of quarrelsome women, of the ill effects produced by anger, and by the righteous falling into sin.

Reflections.

THAT which is said of the greatness of kings, at the beginning of this chapter, shows, that they ought to be honoured; and, if they would be happy, they should remove evil men from them. *Solomon* next teaches us, not to seek after vain-glory, but to be humble; to avoid disputes; to keep secrets; to submit to reproof with cheerfulness; not to boast of any thing, especially of what we have not; by mild speeches to appease those who are enraged; and to be sober and temperate. He advises us not to engage ourselves too far in the affairs of the world, but to live in a religious retirement; and to behave ourselves charitably and prudently towards the afflicted. He exhorts us to return good for evil, in those words which St. *Paul* quotes, *Rom.* xii. *If thy enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head;* that is, by this means we shall gain our enemies, and deliver them from a great evil, and shall do a good work which God will reward; or if they still continue to hate us, they will be utterly inexcusable. Towards the

end of this chapter, the Wise Man teaches us, that the way to silence slanderers is to discourage them, and to let them know we take no delight in hearing them. He observes, that the fall of the righteous occasions great evil, and is a dangerous example; and the wicked think, though very unreasonably, that this gives them authority to sin. Lastly, He says it is a token of great weakness, not to be master of our own temper, nor to be able to resist anger.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE sentences in this chapter are upon the following subjects: The advancement of wicked men, rash curses, the evils that proceed from folly, and the way of replying to fools, that is, to such as want wisdom and virtue; their obstinacy in sin, their good opinion of themselves; idleness, contention, the faithlessness of those who deceive their friends, quarrels, back-biting, dissimulation, and flattery.

Reflections.

THE reflections this chapter affords us are as follow: That honour and preferment are not fit for people without merit and without virtue; that curses pronounced against any one, only harm the person that utters them; that those who are void of wisdom fall into contempt and misery, and occasion many evils to others; that we ought to behave ourselves discreetly towards such persons, and to answer them, or be silent, as prudence shall require. We may farther learn from hence, that the greatest folly, and that which we are seldom cured of, is to have too high an opinion of ourselves; that idleness is a vice that makes a man incapable of doing any good, or of hearkening to any advice; that it is a great imprudence to concern ourselves in the quarrels of others; that if there were no tale-bearers there would be no animosities, and that they are the authors of many evils; that it is great perfidiousness to deceive one's friend, and to pretend friendship, whilst the

heart is filled with hatred and ill designs, and that flattery should be banished from our conversation. Christians should abhor all these vices, as utterly unworthy of our Christian calling; studying meekness, charity, humility, and sincerity, in their words and actions.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THIS chapter treats of the uncertainty of life and of all events; of the praises men give themselves, of jealousy, of reproofs, of the excellence and the duties of true friendship, of bad women, of the effects of praise and flattery, of incorrigible persons, and of economy.

Reflections.

THIS sentence of *Solomon, Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth,* warns us of the vanity of life, and the uncertainty of events, and therefore that it is great folly to depend upon the future. The Wise Man observes next, that to praise one's self is not consistent with prudence or humility; that we ought studiously to avoid anger and passion; that those who reprove us with sincerity are our best friends; that, on the contrary, those who are flattering and insincere are our enemies; that true friends are a very great treasure, and that we ought never to forsake them. Women are taught in this chapter to avoid a sharp and quarrelsome, and to be clothed with a peaceable and quiet spirit. We likewise learn here, that there are some people so incorrigible, that neither warnings nor corrections can alter them. Lastly, The rules about industry and economy, which *Solomon* here gives us, should be well observed, not only because industry is profitable to this life, but chiefly because application to some lawful business is a means of living innocently; and a plain and industrious life is a help to piety, and an instrument of salvation.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THIS chapter contains excellent sentences upon the state of a good and bad conscience; about government, oppression, and integrity: upon children who apply themselves to piety and virtue, or depart from them; on justice, usury, and the observation of God's commands; on the exaltation of good men, the fear of God, tyranny, diligence, sincerity, and respect of persons; on the miseries which envious and covetous men are exposed to; on reproof, and the sin of children robbing their parents; and lastly, on presumption, and charity to the poor.

Reflections.

THIS sentence, *The wicked flee when no man pursueth; and the righteous are bold as a lion,* deserves to be well considered, as it shows, that an evil conscience is generally in fear, whereas a good man is always calm and steady. This chapter teaches us farther, that God sometimes punishes a people by their governors, therefore that good princes and magistrates are a peculiar blessing to a state; that a poor and honest man is more worthy of esteem, than a rich man without virtue; that wise children are a glory to families, but wicked children a disgrace; that he who increases his goods by injustice and extortion, heaps up riches for others; that the Lord rejects the prayers of those who transgress his law; that every body ought to be glad when the righteous are exalted, but that it is a great misfortune when the wicked bear rule. This sentence deserves our particular attention: *He that covereth his sins, shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy:* And this other; *Happy is the man that feareth alway.* These words teach us, that without confession of sins, there is no forgiveness to be obtained, and that the fear of God is a fountain of true happiness. In this chapter we learn also, that idleness produces misery; that justice is to be

exercised without partiality; that envy and avarice only make men miserable; that those who reprove us are most deserving of our love; that it is a great sin in children to steal from their parents; that a good opinion of one's self is a sign of extreme folly; and lastly, that those who give to the poor will never want, while the uncharitable are accursed.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE Wise Man speaks of those that love not to be reproved; of the advancement of the righteous, and of the wicked; of the impure; of kings and governors, and of flatterers; of the good that wise men do to others, and of the evil occasioned by the wicked; of the care which every one should take to procure peace, and command his temper; of the punishment it is to any people to be deprived of God's word; of the necessity of correcting servants; of men that are hasty and rash in their words and actions; and lastly, of anger, pride, and injustice.

Reflections.

WHAT we are to gather from this chapter, is, that those who will not bear reproof are their own enemies; that the impure are exposed to great miseries; that a nation governed by good princes is very happy, but no less miserable when its rulers and magistrates are lovers of bribes, and have under them men without virtue; that flattery is a snare which every wise man should shun; that wise and pious men are very useful in the world, but that wicked men do much mischief in it, and are enemies to the righteous. This chapter teaches us also, that it is wise and prudent to shun disputes, to calm our passions and refrain anger; that we ought to undertake to defend good men; that children, duly corrected, are a joy to their parents; that people without instruction and the fear of God, are corrupted and deserve our pity; that we ought to behave with prudence towards our servants; that we ought

never to engage ourselves in the society of wicked men: and that those who partake with them, and make advantage of their injustice, become partners of their crimes. Lastly, *Solomon* teaches us, that anger hurries men to the commission of many sins; that pride brings men low, while humility exalts them; and that the surest way to be always in a settled condition, is to trust in God, and to walk uprightly.

CHAPTER XXX.

In this chapter *Agar* confesses man's meanness and the majesty of God, and prays him to give him neither poverty nor riches.

Reflections.

We are chiefly to observe from this chapter these two things: I. That what is here said of man's meanness and God's omnipotence, should produce in us a lively sense of our own weakness, of the Divine Majesty, and our dependence on God. II. That a middling station in life is the most happy and desirable; which *Agar* has expressed in this beautiful prayer: *Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me.*

CHAPTER XXXI.

This chapter may be divided into two parts; the first of which contains instructions, which the mother of king *Lemuel* (supposed to be *Solomon*) gave him to restrain him from sensuality, from unjust wars, and from drunkenness; and to engage him to protect the weak and to govern justly. And the second part contains the praises of a virtuous woman.

Reflections.

The instructions, which are contained in the first part of this chapter, relate chiefly to kings and governors, and tend to restrain them from impurity, from unjust wars, and from intemperance; and to inspire

them with sentiments of equity and justice; yet there is no one who is not bound to follow these good instructions, and to study chastity, sobriety, and the love of peace and justice. The second part of this chapter teaches us, that the qualities which render women praiseworthy, are diligence and industry, good housewifery, love of their husbands and children, charity to the poor, discretion and wisdom in their discourse, and above all, the fear of God. Here we learn, that the life of the women in those times, even of those that were rich, was plain and industrious; and that they laboured with their hands to supply the necessities of their families. However, we must not suppose, that what is said in this chapter regards only the maxims and duties of economy. Religion requires of women the same duties and qualities which *Solomon* praises in persons of that sex, and which recommend them in the sight of God. This St. *Paul* shows, when he praises women who take care of their children, who stay at home and guide the house, who exercise charity, and who practise with care all manner of good works; and when he blames, on the other hand, those that are idle tatlers, and busy-bodies, wandering about from house to house. Wherefore Christian women ought to give particular attention to what is said in this place.

The end of the Book of Proverbs.

THE

BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES.

ARGUMENT.

The design of king Solomon in this book, is to expose the vanity of the world, and of human life; and to show, that the only way to be happy is to fear God, and to keep his commandments.

CHAPTER I.

I. *Solomon* teaches, that every thing in this world is vain and uncertain; and particularly, that the knowledge of things here below, and the labours of men, cannot give them content of mind. II. He confirms this by his own experience.

Reflections after reading the Chapter.

THE whole book of *Ecclesiastes*, and particularly this chapter, tends to instruct us in the vanity and inconstancy of the world, and of our own lives; and to teach us, that every thing here is in a continual change, and that the pains which men take for the things below cannot make them happy. This truth we ought not to be less convinced of than *Solomon* was; nay, the vanity of the world should even more evidently appear to those who enjoy the light of the Gospel. Wisdom therefore, and our duty, require us continually to remember that *all is vanity;* which

will be an effectual remedy against the love of the world, and a subjection to our passions. This meditation should likewise engage us to bless God, that we have in the knowledge and fear of him a remedy against this vanity, to which all things are subject. And since the pains which men take to get possession of the advantages of this life, and to acquire the wisdom of this world, is nothing but trouble and folly; prudence requires us to apply ourselves to a more useful and necessary task, and labour to get true wisdom, which consists in the fear of God, and which can only impart to us solid content and perfect happiness in the course of this life, and even after death.

CHAPTER II.

I. *Solomon* shows, by his own experience, the vanity of those things which men most highly esteem in this world. He says, that after he had endeavoured to satisfy himself with pleasures, with buildings, riches, and magnificence, he found that all was nothing but vanity. II. He adds, that he had made the same judgment of the conduct of men, and of their labour in acquiring worldly wisdom and prudence, or in heaping up riches.

Reflections.

We ought to take great notice of what is said in this chapter. We here find a great king, after he had lived in pleasures, magnificence, and plenty, acknowledging that all is nothing but vanity. The example of *Solomon* should make us own the worthlessness of riches, pleasures, honours, and all that men pursue upon earth, and the folly of setting our hearts upon them. But what *Jesus Christ* in the Gospel says upon this occasion, should yet more strongly convince you of this truth. *Solomon's* reflections on the trifling advantages attending that wisdom, which is confined to the things of this life, deserve to be well weighed; and so do his remarks on the folly of those persons, who weary themselves in heaping up riches; and, when they

die, leave them to others, and sometimes to persons they do not know. These considerations should lead us to seek true wisdom, and teach us to moderate our desires after the good things of this world, and direct us what use to make of them; and to avoid that attachment of heart, and those excessive cares, that render a man miserable in this life, and rob him of peace of mind here, and of the happiness of the life to come.

CHAPTER III.

I. *Solomon* shows, that all things in this world have their season, and are liable to change; and concludes from hence that it is the best thing to be content, and to apply ourselves to well-doing. II. He speaks of the unrighteous judgments pronounced by magistrates. Lastly, He observes, that all men are mortal; and that upon this account there is no difference, with respect to the body, between them and the brute beasts.

Reflections.

I. WHAT *Solomon* teaches us concerning the inconstancy, and the continual change of worldly things, and of the life of man, should convince us that solid happiness is not to be found in things fleeting and transitory. II. This should excite us to act wisely to make a good use of time and of the opportunities that offer of procuring this happiness. III. Since God presides over the changes which things here below are subject to, and manifests in them his wisdom, justice, and goodness; it is our duty as well as happiness to submit in all things to his providence, and to events, as he is pleased to dispense them. IV. This chapter likewise teaches us, that whatever confusion and disorder we discover in the world, God knows every thing that is done in it; that he examines particularly the behaviour of judges; and that if they commit any injustice, he will call them to account for it. Lastly, It is to be considered,

that if *Solomon* says men die as the beasts do, he only says it in relation to the death of the body, for he teaches us in this very chapter, that *God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: and that there is a time appointed for every purpose, and for every work:* and he says expressly, at the end of this Book, *that when the dust returns to the earth as it was, the spirit shall return to God who gave it;* and that *God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* The consequence therefore to be drawn from this chapter is, that we ought to use the things of this present life with thankfulness and moderation, but apply ourselves, above all things, to fear and please God.

CHAPTER IV.

Solomon describes the innocent under oppression; the envy that one man bears to another; the idleness of some, and the pains which others take to get riches; the advantages of society, and the inconveniences of being friendless and alone; and lastly, he speaks of men exalted to rule over others.

Reflections.

I. The Wise Man's observations in this chapter, that the innocent are often oppressed, and comfortless, is a proof of the vanity of the world; but it proves that there is a God, who will render to every one according to his works; and therefore, that we must not judge men to be happy or miserable by what befals them in this world. II. The envy of one man against another is a further proof of the vanity of this life; but this passion ought to be banished from the heart, since it only serves to torment us unprofitably, and besides is inconsistent with charity to our neighbour, and with the submission we owe to the will of God. III. *Solomon* teaches us, that it is a great folly to harass and torment ourselves in getting riches together, since we do not know oftentimes into whose hands they will fall. IV. He observes, that it is very advantageous, and very

agreeable, to be united in friendship, provided it be with virtuous persons. V. We here learn, that wisdom is preferable to all worldly goods; and that a poor and wise man is more excellent than kings that want wisdom. Lastly, *Solomon* observes, that men are attached only to those from whom they hope to receive; and that they forsake great men when they have no more to expect of them. This shows, that there is much vanity in the judgments of men, and in worldly greatness, and therefore we are not to depend upon happiness from these things.

CHAPTER V.

Solomon here gives advice, I. Concerning rashness, and hypocrisy in divine service, vows and unrighteous judgments. II. He represents the folly of covetous men, and the vanity of riches; and lastly, He directs us what use to make of the good things which God hath given us.

Reflections.

Let us learn from this chapter, I. To present ourselves before God with great respect, especially when we enter into places set apart for religious worship, and to take heed to our thoughts and words, when we appear before Him. II. That it is an indispensable duty exactly to perform the vows we make; and that it is much better never to make than to break them. III. That if princes and magistrates do not exercise justice, we must believe that there is a God in heaven that sees it, and will judge them for it. IV. That a fondness for riches and pomp will neither prolong life, nor make a man more happy; that, on the contrary, they produce more trouble and anxiety; that men who get their living by labour, enjoy more sweetness and repose than those who possess great estates; that the more men have, the more their cares increase; that the rich cannot enjoy their own riches, that they die like other men, without enjoying any solid satisfaction;

and that they know not what will become of their estates after their death. Lastly, We must remember that when *Solomon* says, *It is good and comely for a man to eat, and to drink, and to enjoy what he hath:* his meaning is not that we should give way to sensuality and pleasures. We cannot ascribe such a thought to him, if we consider what is said in this chapter, of the reverence with which we ought to present ourselves before God, of vows, of the judgment which God will pass on those who judge others, and of the joy which He sheds abroad in the hearts of good men. His meaning is only this, that when God grants us wealth, we ought to be content with it, to receive it, and possess it as his gracious gift, and use it with sobriety and gratitude, but never to place our happiness in it. These are *Solomon's* real sentiments: and these are particularly the sentiments which the Gospel inspires.

CHAPTER VI.

THIS chapter represents the vanity and misery of those, who, having received riches from God, know not how to make a good use of them, and are never easy nor contented.

Reflections.

THE reflections which *Solomon* makes in this chapter are very proper to moderate the heat of men's pursuits after earthly goods. The vanity of their labours appears, not only in their not knowing how to enjoy the good things which they so eagerly pursue; but chiefly in this, that they are deprived of the greatest blessing of life, which is ease and a contented spirit, and cannot secure themselves any thing for the future. The Gospel gives us still clearer directions on this head, when we are told, that *they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts. That the love of money is the root of all evil: and that godliness with content is great gain.*

CHAPTER VII.

I. THIS chapter treats of meditating on death; of reproof, and the use that should be made of it; of patience, of the worth of wisdom, of the manner of behaving in prosperity and adversity; of what happens to the righteous and wicked in this world; of the inconveniences which men bring upon themselves by want of moderation and equity, and by presuming upon themselves; and of the advantages attending the fear of God. II. *Solomon* adds, that all men are liable to sin, and that we must not busily inquire what people say of us, nor make ourselves uneasy about it. Lastly, He speaks of women void of virtue, of the evils occasioned by them, and of the state in which God created man at the beginning.

Reflections.

IN this chapter we have several excellent instructions: I. That it is very necessary to think upon death; and that it is more useful to mourn than to give ourselves up to mirth. II. That wise men hearken with pleasure to those that reprove them, and are mild and gentle in their discourse and in their whole behaviour. III. That riches are a blessing, only when they are attended with wisdom and virtue. IV. That God does all things with perfect justice, that it is he who visits men with prosperity and adversity, and that we should make a good use of both. V. That we ought not to be staggered or offended, if we see the wicked live happy and long, nor if the righteous suffer. These words, *Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise*, must not be understood as a caution not to be too good or too wise, since we can never be wise and good enough, nor use too many endeavours to become so; but *Solomon* speaks this against those, who, when insisting upon their own right, or passing judgment upon others, proceed with the utmost rigour and severity, not observing the rules of moderation and equity,

and are so presumptuous and conceited, that they want to direct everything, and busily meddle with what no ways concerns them. The Wise Man teaches us likewise, that all men are liable to fall into some fault, and therefore they ought to bear one with another. He advises us not to be inquisitive, nor make ourselves uneasy about any thing that others may say of us; as this would be apt to rob us of our peace and tranquillity, and tempt us to resentment and rash judgments. What is said of women towards the end of this chapter, should be well understood. As the Scripture often speaks of women illustrious for their virtues, and *Solomon* himself praises such, *Prov.* xii. 4.—xviii. 23.—xxxi. 10. he could not mean, that a virtuous woman was nowhere to be found: there is, in this respect, no difference between the two sexes. But *Solomon's* meaning is, that having searched out the reason of all the wickedness that passes in the world, ver. 25, he had found, that there was nothing more wicked and dangerous than a disorderly woman, such as he describes, ver. 26, that her malice and artifice are scarce to be conceived; nor can they who have suffered themselves to be surprised by her, without the utmost difficulty escape her snares. *Solomon* therefore does not speak of women in general, but of such as he had been describing. One reason, no doubt, which made this king talk thus, was his being himself seduced by women. See 1 *Kings* xi. Lastly, *Solomon* teaches us, that God has made man upright, but that he has wilfully corrupted himself; from whence it follows, that we ought not to ascribe man's depravity to God, since it is wholly owing to himself.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE instructions contained in this chapter relate to the excellence of wisdom, to the respect due to kings, to prudence, to the uncertainty of events, and the certainty of death; others represent the abuse men make of God's patience, the present condition

of good and bad men, and the use we ought to make of the advantages of life.

Reflections.

THE principal instructions which the Wise Man gives us in this chapter are; that wisdom is man's true happiness and pleasure; that we should pay to kings the reverence that is due to them; that one of the chief duties of wisdom is, to make a right use of time and opportunity in all things, the neglect of which exposes men to many evils; that men know not what is to happen to them; that events, and even our own lives, are not in our power; but that death is unavoidable, both by the wicked and the good, which is a powerful motive to patience and godliness. We are moreover taught in this chapter, that sinners usually harden themselves, because God bears with them, and defers their punishment; but that, nevertheless, they will receive, sooner or later, what they have deserved; that if the righteous are unhappy in this world, and wicked men happy, this is an argument of the vanity of things here below; but, that God will have it so to try good men, and to invite the wicked to repentance; and that at last he will render to both according to their works. Lastly, We must take notice, that when *Solomon* says, he had *valued pleasure above all things*, he speaks of reasonable pleasures, which proceed from a lawful and moderate use of the goods that God has given us, which have nothing in them irregular and contrary to piety.

CHAPTER IX.

WE learn from this chapter, I. That good and bad men are subject to the same accidents; that the dead have no share in what passes upon the earth, nor can they any longer enjoy the good things of this life, and therefore we ought to use them while we may. II. That men are not the disposers of events. Lastly, That wisdom is of a very great price, though wise men are often despised.

Reflections.

We may observe upon this chapter, I. That though good and bad events are common to all men, as *Solomon* acquaints us; yet just men, and their actions are, nevertheless, in the hands of God, who will judge both the righteous and the wicked. II. When we are told by *Solomon*, "That the dead have no longer any share in what passes in this world, and that their love and hatred are both at an end; and therefore, that we ought to eat our bread with joy all the days of our life;" his design is, that we should improve the advantages of life, and make a wise use of what we have in possession; but let us not abuse this notion, and imagine we are at full liberty to give ourselves up to worldly joys and pleasures, and to say with the ungodly, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.* III. *Solomon* teaches us, that wisdom and strength are profitable upon many occasions; but that, however, we are not the masters of contingencies; and that we often fall into misfortunes, without being able to foresee or prevent them. This teaches us never to rely upon our own strength, prudence, and address, and to remember always that we depend upon Providence. IV. We may here observe, that though wisdom is very advantageous, and worthy the highest esteem, yet it is often despised, especially in poor men; but that this is a very partial judgment; and that we ought to esteem wise and virtuous people, without having respect to their appearance.

CHAPTER X.

This chapter treats of the faults committed by wise men; of the benefits of wisdom, and the evils occasioned by folly; of the exaltation of unworthy persons, and of the miseries attending nations, where the governors are unfit to govern, being young, and addicted to pleasures and intemperance. Here is likewise mention made of prudence and rashness in dis-

course, of sloth, and of the respect that is due to great men.

Reflections.

THERE are four principal observations to be made on this chapter: I. That the faults committed by those who pass for wise men are of great importance, because they are a bad example, and give scandal to religion. This should teach virtuous persons to take heed to their behaviour, but does not authorize any body to imitate them in the faults they commit. II. That in all things men should behave with prudence, and neither do nor say any thing rashly and out of time. By this means we may avoid many inconveniences, and many sins, which men fall into for want of reflecting on their words and actions. III. That when people of mean extraction, and at the same time destitute of wisdom and virtue, are exalted to honours, they generally occasion many evils. IV. *Solomon* has taught us, that people and states are very much to be pitied, when their princes and magistrates have not that wisdom and understanding which is necessary; when they are young and without experience; or if they are addicted to drunkenness, gluttony, and fond of pleasures; but, on the contrary, that a land is happy which is governed by persons that are wise, sober, and worthy to command. Upon which we must observe, that the faults of men in authority should not hinder us from respecting them; but that pious kings and upright magistrates are worthy of double honour.

CHAPTER XI.

THE Wise Man makes several reflections with regard to the use we ought to make of worldly goods. He shows, that we should follow the order which God has established, to procure the necessaries of life; remembering, however, that all things depend upon the providence of God, and that the things of this life are vain and transitory.

Reflections.

We are to learn from this chapter, I. To conform to the appointed rules of Providence in providing the necessaries of life, and in our use of things temporal. II. That the works of God are wonderful, and above our comprehension; but that it becomes us to rely upon that adorable Providence which provides for all, and in the mean time enjoy all the blessings it affords us without placing our happiness in them.

CHAPTER XII.

This chapter has three parts: I. *Solomon* exhorts young people to fear God, before old age surprises them, and death takes them out of the world. II. He describes the infirmities of old age, and says, that it ends in death. Lastly, He concludes this book with showing, that the design of all he had here said, is to teach men to acknowledge the vanity of this world, and to fear God.

Reflections.

Young people ought to make a good use of the grave and pressing exhortations, which the Wise Man gives them in this chapter; and learn from thence, I. That it is of the greatest importance to shun the desires of youth, and especially luxury and pleasures; to remember their Creator whilst they are young, and to fear his judgment, before they are deprived of the opportunity of discharging these duties; lest, if they follow the inclinations of their heart, and give themselves up to the pleasures of the world, they discover their mistake when it is too late to find a remedy. II. The description *Solomon* here gives us of the infirmities of old age, exposes the vanity of this life; but it should lead us chiefly to observe, that since man decays in such a manner, and his body is weakened and consumed by old age, age must be no very fit time to glorify God in, or work out our salvation when we have neglected to do it before;

and that therefore we ought to labour therein before our end approaches, and whilst we have time and strength for the work. III. These words, *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, nd the spirit shall return unto God who gave it*, are a clear proof that the soul is immortal and dies not with the body; and therefore they deserve to be read with peculiar attention. The conclusion of this Book of *Ecclesiastes* is likewise very remarkable, wherein *Solomon* declares that *the conclusion of the whole matter*, and the design of all he has said is, to *fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* These last words may serve to explain all that we read in this book; as they are in truth the end and the sum of all religion, and of all the lessons we meet with in the sacred books.

The end of the Book of Ecclesiastes.

THE

SONG OF SOLOMON.

ARGUMENT.

The Author of the Song of Songs is Solomon. What we read in this Book, taken literally, seems to be a description of the love which Solomon and his queen had for each other. But this Song must be understood in a spiritual and mystical sense; and so indeed have all the ancient doctors, both Jews and Christians, understood it. In this Book is represented, in figurative and allegorical expressions, the mutual love of Christ and his Church, which is called in Scripture his spouse, and the sentiments which this love produces in the hearts of all true believers: in this light we must consider what is contained in this Book.

THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH.

ARGUMENT.

The Prophet Isaiah lived about 800 *years before the coming of our Saviour; and prophesied about sixty years in the kingdom of Judea. There is great strength and majesty in his exhortations, in his reproofs, and in his threatenings. In this Book there are several predictions relating to the Jews, and other neighbouring nations; and it is to be observed, that of all the prophets, Isaiah has spoke the most clearly of Jesus Christ, of his sufferings, of his kingdom, and of the calling of the Gentiles.*

CHAPTER I.

I. *ISAIAH* reproaches the *Jews* for their ingratitude, and extreme corruption, which would shortly occasion their utter ruin. II. He reproves them for their hypocrisy, and vain confidence in sacrifices and external worship. III. He exhorts them to repentance, and declares, that if they would be converted, God would pardon and bless them; but if they continued in their disobedience, they would be destroyed. Lastly, He complains of the corruption of the city of *Jerusalem;* and particularly, that the magistrates and rulers were given to injustice; and declares, that

God would soon take vengeance on them for all these sins; and that the *Jews* should be deprived of all the privileges they enjoyed.

Reflections after reading the Chapter.

I. When we read the prophet's reproaches of the *Jews* for their ingratitude, we are led to consider, that God, in admitting us into the bosom of his church, and adopting us for his children, has conferred greater favours on us than on his ancient people: and therefore we shall be infinitely more guilty, and expose ourselves to more heavy chastisements, if we ungratefully rebel against him. II. God declares in this chapter, that it is in vain to worship him in public, and attend on him in the religious assemblies, and practise the most solemn acts of devotion, whilst we live in sin; and that God abhors such worship. III. This chapter teaches us, that the only way to avoid the wrath of God, is to purify our hearts by repentance, to cease from doing evil, and learn to do well; that God is always ready graciously to receive sinners that are converted; but that the disobedient and hardened shall perish in their impenitency. IV. It must be observed, that *Isaiah* particularly complained of the depravity of the judges and magistrates of *Jerusalem*, saying, that they were companions of thieves, that they loved gifts, and followed after rewards. These censures and the threatenings denounced against wicked magistrates, prove, that sins committed by persons of a public character are usually attended with a general corruption, and with the most severe judgments of God: and that, on the contrary, it is a great blessing on cities and states, when God sets over them just and upright rulers.

CHAPTER II.

The prophet foretells in this chapter, I. That all nations should be called to the knowledge and ser-

vice of the true God. II. That God would reject the *Jews*, because of their idolatry and other sins. III. That he would destroy, by his almighty power, those that set themselves against him: and that he would abolish idolatry.

Reflections.

THIS chapter contains three prophecies; the first of which foretold the calling of the Gentiles; the second the rejection of the *Jews;* and the third the destruction of the wicked, who are the enemies of God. We see the completion of these prophecies. The several nations of the world have been called to the knowledge of the true God by the Gospel, and are come into the church, and made partakers of the covenant of God; the *Jews* have been rejected, by reason of their sins, and their incredulity; and God has in all times confounded the pride and power of the ungodly, and the enemies of his kingdom. The use then we should make of reading this chapter is, to be very sensible of the great advantage we enjoy in being in the number of those whom God has admitted into his church; and to express our gratitude by a sincere endeavour to know his will, by serving him with purity and zeal, and by walking in his way. We should improve, by the example of the *Jews*, and by the judgments which are denounced against those who oppose God, lest by our rebellion we expose ourselves to those dreadful judgments, which he will pour upon the wicked, and on all those who do not reverence his power.

CHAPTER III.

Isaiah foretells the utter destruction of the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, and of the kingdom of *Judah;* which, he says, would come upon them for their sins; and chiefly for the injustice which the rulers of the people openly committed, and the luxury and immodesty of the women of *Jerusalem*.

CHAPTER IV.

THE prophet foretells in this chapter, that in those troublesome times the *Jewish* nation should be extremely diminished; but that God would restore the remnant of that people, sanctify, and protect them.

Reflections on Chapters iii. *and* iv.

THESE chapters teach us, I. That God withdraws his protection from nations that provoke him by their sins; and that he punishes them, particularly, by setting over them rulers that know not how to govern well. II. That when men, instead of concealing their sins, proclaim them openly; and, instead of being ashamed of them, commit them without reserve, there is reason to believe the judgments of God are not far off. III. That among the sins which provoke the wrath of God, he is, above all, offended with the injustice committed by persons of a public character, and with luxury and pride. The description is very remarkable which *Isaiah* here gives of the luxury and vanity of the maidens and women of *Jerusalem*, their various ornaments, their wanton attire, their immodesty, their pride, their soft and dissolute lives. We here see, that idleness and luxury were introduced into *Jerusalem*, with other sins; and the prophet expressly declares that this would be one cause of the ruin of the *Jews*, and of the miseries that were going to fall upon them. This leaves no room to doubt but luxury is very odious in the sight of God, and still more odious in Christians than in the *Jews*, and that when immodesty, idleness, vanity, effeminacy, and love of pleasures generally prevail, they are a sure mark of great corruption, and forerunners of the divine judgments. Lastly, God here gives tokens of his goodness, in promising that after the *Jews* had been chastised, he would restore and sanctify them. This he did, when he delivered them from their enemies, who were shortly to attack them; when he recovered them from the *Babylonish* captivity;

and chiefly, by sending his Son into the world, to bless them, and to redeem them from their sins.

CHAPTER V.

I. *Isaiah* represents, by the similitude of a well cultivated but barren vine, the care that God had taken of the *Jews*, the ingratitude of that people, and the judgments that were shortly to fall upon them. II. He particularizes the chief sins of that nation, whch were covetousness, injustice, drunkenness, love of pleasures, contempt of God's judgments, profaneness, and the iniquity of judges in taking bribes to corrupt them. III. The prophet foretells that the *Jews* should be punished for all these sins, and that distant nations, as the *Assyrians* and *Chaldeans*, should come against *Jerusalem*.

Reflections.

THE complaints which God makes of the ingratitude and disobedience of the *Jews*, which he represents by the similitude of a barren vine, plainly teach us, that God does all that is necessary for the good of men; that he makes use of the most proper means to engage them to love and fear him; that therefore he is not the author of their ruin; and that if they perish, it is wholly owing to their own fault. This comparison teaches us, likewise, that when men abuse the methods that God takes to render men happy, he deprives them of them, and forsakes them. Besides this, it appears from this chapter, that there are some sins which in a particular manner expose men to the divine vengeance; as covetousness and an immoderate desire of riches; drunkenness, the love of mirth, feastings, and pleasures; security, and a contempt of the divine threatenings, impious opinions and discourses, and the injustice committed by judges and magistrates. The *Jews* were delivered into the hands of the *Chaldeans* for these sins; and we may see by their example, that when men give themselves up to work wickedness, they are infallibly exposed to God's wrath.

CHAPTER VI.

THE prophet relates a vision, in which God appeared to him in his glory, and commanded him to speak to the *Jews* in his name, and to declare to them, that since their obstinacy was past remedy, their cities should be laid waste; but that nevertheless their ruin should not be past recovery.

Reflections.

THERE are two things in this chapter which chiefly demand our serious attention. I. The magnificent vision which the prophet *Isaiah* had, wherein he saw the Lord seated upon his throne, and surrounded by his holy angels, who celebrated his holiness and infinite majesty. By this remarkable vision, which filled the prophet with fear and trembling, God designed to confirm him in his calling as a prophet, and prepare him to say and do whatever he should command. The account given us of this vision should inspire us with a great reverence and dread of the majesty of God, and stir us up to praise and adore him continually with the angels, saying, with profound humility: *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.* II. We must observe, that what is here said of the blindness and obstinacy of the *Jews*, is not to be understood as if God had blinded them, and hardened their hearts. God only informs the prophet what would be the success of his ministry, and foretells that the *Jews* would harden themselves wilfully. We ought never to attribute to God the sin and obstinacy of men, since he is so far from blinding and hardening them, that he does all that is necessary to enlighten them, to convert and save them: and if they continue in their sins, and perish in them, it is wholly owing to their own wickedness, and because they would have it so.

CHAPTER VII.

Ahaz, king of *Judah*, being attacked by *Rezin* king of *Syria*, and *Pekah*, king of *Israel*, God sends *Isaiah* to him, to assure him that he would defend *Jerusalem*, and that the kingdoms of *Syria* and *Israel* should be soon destroyed. II. The prophet, to give *Ahaz* the stronger assurance that the kingdom of *Judah* should not be delivered into the hands of the enemies that attacked him, foretells the extraordinary birth of a child. III. He declares, that the kingdom of *Israel* should be ravaged by the *Egyptians* and *Assyrians*.

Reflections.

THE care which God took to send *Isaiah* to *Ahaz*, who was a wicked and idolatrous king, to promise him protection against the kings of *Syria* and *Israel*, who made war upon him, is an instance of the goodness of God towards men, even those that offend him, and of his love to his people. *Isaiah* exhorts *Ahaz* and his subjects not to fear those two smoking fire-brands, as he in contempt calls the kings of *Syria* and *Israel;* and, in fact, these two kings, who intended to invade the kingdom of *Judah*, were themselves destroyed soon after, with their kingdoms. There is, in this chapter, a remarkable prediction; the prophet says, that *within three-score and five years, Ephraim*, that is, the *Israelites* of the ten tribes, *should be broken, that it be no more a people.* This came to pass at the end of that term, when *Esarhaddon*, king of *Assyria*, sent strangers to dwell in the land of *Israel*, in the room of the *Israelites*, who had remained there pretty numerous after *Salmaneser*, king of *Assyria*, had destroyed the kingdom of the ten tribes. The behaviour of *Ahaz*, who rejected the promises and offers that *Isaiah* made him from God, shows us, that if it be tempting God to expect what he has not promised, it is no less offending him not to believe his promises, nor to receive the offers of his favour. However, we here find, that God, notwithstanding *Ahaz's* refusal,

told him by *Isaiah*, that in a very short time, and before a young son of that prophet had any knowledge, *Jerusalem* should be delivered from both the kings who made war against it. But what is most remarkable is, that *Isaiah* then foretold that a virgin should bring forth a son. This prophecy relates to *Jesus Christ*, and is applied to him in the Gospel, as he alone was born of a virgin; and to him alone can be ascribed what *Isaiah* saith of this extraordinary child, and the august titles given him in this and the following chapters. Further, as the Messiah, whose birth is here predicted, was to be of the family of king *David*, this prophecy tended to assure the *Jews*, that God would not suffer that family, and the kingdom of *Judah*, who were then attacked, to be destroyed by their enemies.

CHAPTER VIII.

I. *Isaiah* continues to prophesy, that the attempts of the kings of *Syria* and *Israel* against *Jerusalem* would be in vain; and that before a son who was born to him should be of an age to understand, the *Assyrians* should come against those two kingdoms, and pass on even to the kingdom of *Judah*. II. He exhorts the *Jews* to put their trust in God, and fear none but him; to cleave to his word, and not to have recourse to sorcerers nor idols. He speaks, lastly, of the desolation that should at that time befal those *Jews* which dwelt in *Galilee*.

Reflections.

THE repeated assurances which *Isaiah* gave king *Ahaz* and the *Jews*, that they should be delivered from the kings of *Syria* and *Israel*, show, that God defeats the attempts which the enemies of his church form against it, and that he renders their contrivances vain and ineffectual; and therefore that in God alone we ought to place our fear and our trust. The event answered the prediction: *Tiglathpileser*, king of the *Assyrians*, came to *Ahaz's* assistance, took the city of *Damascus*, which was the capital of the kingdom of *Syria*, slew *Rezin*

their king, and in him put an end to that kingdom. *Tiglath-pileser* took also part of the kingdom of *Israel*, and carried the people captive into *Assyria*; but made *Ahaz* king of *Judah* tributary. Some time after, *Salmaneser*, who succeeded *Tiglath-pileser*, totally destroyed the kingdom of *Israel*: and at the end of eight years, *Sennacherib*, another king of *Assyria*, made war upon the kingdom of *Judah*, under the reign of *Hezekiah*, son of *Ahaz*: he even besieged *Jerusalem*, but in vain, since God protected and miraculously delivered that city. Thus all that *Isaiah* had foretold was fulfilled. In the second part of this chapter, the prophet very strongly condemns those, who, in the danger the *Jews* were then in, instead of applying to God and his word, had recourse to sorcerers, and to the dead. From whence it appears, that it is a great crime, and extreme impiety, to consult sorcerers, and those who pretend to foretell things to come; and that those who give credit to such persons, and make use of such damnable methods, forsake God. This teaches us likewise, that we ought to have no other support of our trust, or rule of our faith, than God's word. Lastly, It is to be observed, that if *Galilee*, where the tribes of *Zebulun* and *Naphtali* were situated, was the first that was laid waste by the *Assyrians*, that country had afterwards the happiness to be the first that was enlightened by the Gospel; *Jesus Christ's* most usual abode being in *Galilee*, as we are taught by St. *Matthew*, in the fourth chapter of his Gospel, where he applies to the inhabitants of *Galilee* the last words of this, and the first words of the following chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

THIS chapter has two parts. I. *Isaiah* foretells, that God would deliver *Jerusalem*, and the kingdom of *Judah*, and establish an everlasting kingdom in the family of *David*, by a son which should be born to him. II. He prophesies, that the kingdom of *Israel*, which at that time made war against that of

Judah, should be humbled by the *Syrians* and *Philistines*, and by the king of *Assyria*.

Reflections.

We read in the beginning of this chapter, *the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light;* which words were fulfilled, not only in the deliverance which God formerly vouchsafed the *Jews* when he defended them against their enemies, but chiefly in the favour granted to that people, and afterwards to other nations, in causing the light of his Gospel to shine upon them, when they were in the darkness of sin, and of death. This happy change was wrought by the coming of *Jesus Christ* the Son of God, whose glory, divinity, and eternal kingdom, are here described in terms so clear and remarkable, and which can be applied to no other. II. We are next to observe what *Isaiah* prophesied, that God would display divers judgments upon the *Israelites*, by means of the *Syrians* and their other neighbours; and that because they would not turn to him that smote them, but even soothed themselves in their sins, he would send them new and greater calamities, *and that his anger should not be turned away, but his hand still stretched out against them.* This teaches us, that God afflicts men to bring them to him; that when they harden themselves, he doubles the stroke of his rod: and therefore, that the only way to turn away his wrath, is to profit by his chastisements, to be converted and humbled.

CHAPTER X.

I. This chapter contains threatenings against those who oppress others by violence and injustice; and particularly against the *Assyrians*, whom the prophet foretells God would make use of to punish the kingdom of *Israel;* and that they should think to become masters even of *Jerusalem*, as they had conquered *Calno*, and some other cities here mentioned. But the prophet adds, that after they had executed the designs of the Almighty, he would punish them for their injustice and pride. II. He comforts the

inhabitants of *Jerusalem* against the fear of the king of *Assyria*, by promising them that God would redeem the remnant of his people.

Reflections.

We may gather in general from this chapter, that violent, proud, and unjust men, are threatened with the curse of God. But what we are chiefly to observe here is, that God thought fit to make use of the king of *Assyria* to punish the *Israelites;* that this prince was to accomplish the designs of God without knowing it; that he would boast of his success, and even threaten to reduce *Jerusalem!* but that afterwards God would destroy him, because he had unjustly attacked the *Israelites*, and out of a principle of pride, and because he had attributed his victories to his own wisdom and strength. In this chapter, which is very remarkable, we see plainly that although God lets the wicked alone, and employs them to chastise men, and to execute his designs, he nevertheless punishes them justly for doing it; since their actions are voluntary and free, and the end they propose is only to gratify their own passions, and not to fulfil the designs of Providence. This should teach us to adore the ways of God's providence, and to confess, that he presides over all things, even over the criminal and unjust actions of the wicked; but that, however, he is by no means the author of the sins which men commit: that he has a right to punish them, and that he will infallibly do it. These considerations, which perfectly vindicate the ways of God's providence, teach us not to fear the power and malice of men, and to trust always in him. *Isaiah* says, in this chapter, *That a remnant of Israel shall return;* which describes not only what happened to those who were delivered from the king of *Assyria*, or from the *Babylonish* captivity, but this relates in general to those *Jews* who were saved by believing in *Jesus Christ*, while the rest were rejected. This is St. *Paul's* application of the words

of *Isaiah*, in the Epistle to the *Romans: Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.*

CHAPTER XI.

I. THE prophet in this chapter foretells, that although the kingdom and family of *David* were to be brought low, and reduced to a very abject condition by their enemies; yet God would preserve that family, and raise up a great king, and put his spirit upon him. II. He represents, in figurative expressions, the kingdom of the Messiah, under whom the whole earth should be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. III. He promises that God would again display in behalf of his people, to recover them from the several countries where they should be dispersed, the same power which he had displayed when he brought them out of the land of *Egypt*.

Reflections.

WHAT is said in this chapter may be applied to that which God did in behalf of the family of king *David* and of the *Jews*, under the reign of good king *Hezekiah*, when he preserved them from the enemies which then attacked them; and when he afterwards brought back the remnant of that people from the several countries where they had been dispersed. But the true sense of the prophecy is that the Messiah was to spring from the posterity of *David:* that the spirit of God should rest upon him, with his most extraordinary gifts; that his kingdom was to be a spiritual and heavenly kingdom; and that the design of this kingdom would be to reconcile all men, to make them live in peace, and to fill the whole earth with the knowledge of the Lord. These are so many signs which prove that *Jesus* is the Messiah who was to come; these are powerful motives to engage us to submit to his kingdom, to live in peace and unity, and by leading a holy life, to acknowledge God's mercy to us, in giving us the knowledge of himself, and redeeming us by *Jesus Christ*

CHAPTER XII.

In this chapter the prophet adds a song of thanksgiving for the great salvation with which God was to visit his people.

Reflections.

We have in this chapter a pattern of the praises and thanksgivings which Christians ought to render to God continually, for that great deliverance which he has vouchsafed unto them, in redeeming them by his son *Jesus Christ.*

CHAPTER XIII.

The contents of the preceding chapters relate to the state of the *Jews*, when they were attacked by their enemies, in the reign of *Ahaz*, and foretell what would befal them, as well as the kingdom of *Israel.* The thirteenth and following chapters contain prophecies against the nations and kingdoms who should afflict the people of God. In this chapter he foretells, that the *Babylonians* would be subdued by the *Medes* and *Persians.*

Reflections.

This general reflection is to be made on this and the following chapters to the twenty-fourth, and upon several other parts of this Book; that the predictions of *Isaiah* did not only relate to the *Jews*, but that God commanded him likewise to prophesy against other nations, even the most powerful empires, such as was at that time the *Babylonish;* and to commit his prophecies to writing. God was pleased thus to order it, for the instruction and consolation of the *Jews*, and to convince all men, in ages to come, that he is the Almighty God, the Lord of kings and nations. This is a mark of majesty and greatness, which should be well observed in these prophecies: and is the more remarkable, as all the threatenings

denounced therein against the several nations were put in execution. On this thirteenth chapter it must be observed, that as the *Babylonians* were to take *Jerusalem*, burn the temple, and carry the people into captivity, God, to give the *Jews* a right sense of this great event, and for their consolation, was pleased to declare long beforehand, that the empire of the *Babylonians* should be destroyed. This prediction is very wonderful: *Isaiah* expressly declares, that *Babylon* should be taken at a time, and in a manner, which the *Babylonians* could not have foreseen; that it should be utterly destroyed, and never recover from its ruins, but become a retreat for wild beasts. *Isaiah* foretells this two hundred years before, when the *Babylonish* empire was in the most flourishing condition; at the end of which time *Babylon* was taken by the *Medes* and *Persians*, as we learn from the fifth chapter of *Daniel*, and from profane history. This prophecy affords us the clearest conviction of the divine authority of the Sacred Writings: it proves, that God was the director of all these great events. We here remark the divine justice against the *Babylonians*, who had so unjustly oppressed the *Jews;* and lastly, we see that God graciously protects his church. These predictions, which, when they were pronounced, had a natural tendency to comfort the *Jews*, should make still greater impression upon us, as they have been since so exactly fulfilled; and they furnish us with the most convincing proofs of the divinity of the prophecies contained in this Book.

CHAPTER XIV.

I. *Isaiah* foretells the deliverances and restoration of the *Jews*. II. He declares that God would destroy the *Babylonians* by his power, for their own pride and cruelty, though they trusted in their own strength. III. He threatens likewise the *Philistines* with total destruction.

Reflections.

THE promises, which *Isaiah* made to the *Jews*, show, that if the prophets had a commission to threaten them, they were also sent to comfort them, with an assurance that God would be reconciled with them. Thus has God always given proofs of his goodness, at the same time that he has given tokens of his justice. *Isaiah's* description of the insupportable pride of the *Babylonians*, of their formidable power, and the extent of their dominions, should lead us to consider, that how great soever the power of the kings of the earth, and the enemies of the church may be, it can never hold out against God; and that his justice is engaged to confound the proud and unjust. This should teach us humility and confidence in God; since pride is not less odious in private persons than in princes and nations. Again, the destruction of the city and empire of *Babylon* very evidently proves the truth and divinity of *Isaiah's* prophecies. The prophet mentions one very remarkable circumstance; which is, that this great and pompous city should become pools of water, and a dwelling for wild beasts; which actually came to pass afterwards, as we are informed by history. The destruction of the *Philistines*, the ancient enemies of God's people, presents us with the same reflections; which came to pass in the reign of *Hezekiah*, a few years after *Isaiah* had prophesied against them.

CHAPTER XV.

Isaiah, in this and the following chapter, prophesies against the *Moabites;* foretells the taking of the principal cities, *Ar* and *Kir*, and others here mentioned; and declares that their country should be reduced to the utmost extremity.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE prophet in this chapter says, the *Moabites* should send lambs, that is, a tribute to the king of

Jerusalem; that the *Israelites* should dwell in their own land; and that all this should happen to punish the pride and insolence of the *Moabites;* and lastly, he takes notice, that these threatenings should be accomplished in three years.

Reflections on Chapters XV. and XVI.

THE prophecy concerning the destruction of the *Moabites* was fulfilled at the exact time mentioned by *Isaiah,* when *Salmaneser,* king of *Assyria,* made war upon the *Israelites.* This prince took possession of the kingdom of *Moab,* and the *Moabites* became afterwards tributaries to the kingdom of *Judah,* and did homage to *Hezekiah,* after the *Assyrians* had been defeated in that king's reign. All these events God was pleased to foretell, to convince the *Jews* of the truth of all that the prophets declared, and to teach them that his providence ruled over all things. The same instructions we may receive from several other prophecies of the like nature. In the desolation of the *Moabites* we should likewise consider the just punishment of their pride, and of the injuries they had done to the *Jews,* and the care which God has, in all ages, been graciously pleased to take of his people.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE prophet foretells the ruin of *Damascus,* the capital of the kingdom of *Syria,* which is called the fortress of *Ephraim:* that is, the defence of the *Israelites* of the ten tribes, who had put themselves under the protection of the king of *Syria.* He denounces the destruction of the ten tribes themselves, because they had forsaken the true God to serve idols.

Reflections.

IN the sixteenth chapter of the Second Book of Kings, we read an account of the destruction of the kingdom of *Damascus,* foretold by *Isaiah. Tiglath-pileser,* king of the *Assyrians,* took that city, laid it

waste, carried the inhabitants into captivity, and put their king to death; and a few years after the kingdom of *Israel*, having made a league with the *Assyrians* against the kingdom of *Judah*, was likewise subdued and totally extinguished by the same *Assyrians*, who had conquered *Damascus*. By this means the *Syrians* and the *Israelites*, who had unjustly attacked the king of *Judah*, were punished for their injustice, as *Isaiah* had several times foretold; and the *Israelites*, in particular, received the punishment which their idolatry justly merited. Thus the divine justice, and the truth of *Isaiah's* predictions, appeared in the destruction of both these kingdoms.

CHAPTER XVIII.

This chapter is attended with obscurity, and it is difficult to say with certainty what is the precise meaning of it, by reason of the figurative expressions we meet with in it, which may be explained more ways than one; and because history does not afford us sufficient light on the subject. However, the most probable interpretation seems to be, that the king of *Ethiopia*, when he was going to march against the king of *Assyria*, who had attacked the *Jews*, would invite the *Egyptians* to join him; but that God would confound the designs of the *Assyrians*, and deliver *Jerusalem* by his own power alone.

Reflections.

In the nineteenth chapter of the Second Book of Kings, we find the two events which the prophet *Isaiah* here takes notice of. One is, that *Tirhakah*, king of *Ethiopia*, came with his army against *Sennacherib*, king of *Assyria*, who at that time was besieging *Jerusalem*. The other is, that *Sennacherib's* army was utterly destroyed by an angel; and that prince, returning to his own country, perished in a miserable manner. God therefore himself, and not the king of *Ethiopia*, was the deliverer of *Jerusalem*,

and took vengeance on the *Assyrians;* wherein he displayed his infinite power, and his love for his people.

CHAPTER XIX.

THIS chapter is a prophecy against the *Egyptians,* which foretells, I. Their confusion and dissension among themselves, till a powerful king should execute the judgments of God against them. II. He foretells, that *Egypt* should come to the knowledge and worship of the true God.

Reflections.

HISTORY perfectly clears the predictions contained in this chapter. After the death of *Sethon,* king of *Egypt,* the *Egyptians* had twelve kings, who were at war together a long time; after which, all *Egypt* was under the dominion of one prince only, named *Psammitichus.* The *Egyptians* were afterwards attacked by the king of *Assyria,* and by *Nebuchadnezzar,* who subdued them; and in some time *Egypt, Judah,* and *Assyria,* were governed by the same monarch. At the end of this chapter, *Isaiah* says, that the cities in the land of *Egypt* should speak the language of *Canaan;* that there should be an altar to the Lord in that land, and that the *Egyptians* should call upon God and do sacrifice to him. This relates first, to what happened when the *Jews* retired into *Egypt,* after the destruction of *Jerusalem,* and afterwards built a temple there, called the temple of *Onias,* which engaged many of the *Egyptians* to worship the true God. But this prophecy was not fully completed till the times of the Gospel, when the *Egyptians* and other nations were converted, and by that means accounted the people of God, as well as the *Israelites.*

CHAPTER XX.

GOD commands *Isaiah* to walk barefoot and naked, that is, without his robe, having on only his under garments; to signify, that in three years the *Egyptians*

and the *Ethiopians* should be led into captivity naked and barefoot, by the *Assyrians;* and that this should convince the *Jews*, that they had done wrong to imagine that the king of *Egypt* should deliver them from the king of *Assyria*.

Reflections.

THIS prophecy was verified when the king of *Assyria* carried his arms as far as *Egypt*, took several cities in it, and carried a great number of *Egyptians* captives into his own country. This must needs undeceive the *Jews*, who trusted on the *Egyptians*, and teach them to trust in God only.

CHAPTER XXI.

THIS chapter contains two predictions: The first is concerning the destruction of the *Babylonians*, who were to fall into the hands of the *Medes* and *Persians*. The second relates to the people of *Dumah* and the *Arabians* of *Kedar*, who were likewise to be exposed to the utmost miseries. The people of *Dumah* were of the posterity of the *Ishmaelites*.

Reflections.

IN this chapter *Isaiah* foretells the taking of *Babylon* by the *Medes* and *Persians;* he calls them to besiege it and to conquer it; and expressly mentions their taking that city in a night, when the king of *Babylon* should be feasting, and taking his fill of pleasures. Thus it actually came to pass, as history informs us, and we read at the end of the fifth chapter of *Daniel*. This prophecy, which was pronounced so long beforehand, contains in it a most evident mark of majesty and divinity. The *Edomites* and *Arabians*, who are here mentioned, were also invaded by the *Assyrians*. By which God was pleased to punish the idolatry of those nations, and avenge the injuries they had done to the *Jews*.

CHAPTER XXII.

AFTER the prophet had foretold, in the foregoing chapters, the destruction of those idolatrous people who had oppressed the *Jews*, he denounces, in this chapter, the miseries that would befal the *Jews* themselves, notwithstanding all the precautions taken by the inhabitants of *Jerusalem* to secure them from their enemies; and he says, that this would come upon them, because they had abandoned themselves to dissolute pleasures, at a time when God called them to repentance. *Isaiah* foretells, likewise, that *Shebna*, one of king *Hezekiah's* chief officers, when *Sennacherib* besieged *Jerusalem*, should be removed from his place, and that *Eliakim* should succeed him. What is here said of *Shebna*, gives room to suppose that this prophecy relates to what happened when the *Assyrians* came against *Jerusalem*, and carried captive to *Babylon*, *Manasseh* the son of *Hezekiah*, as we read 2 *Chron.* xxxiii. 11.

Reflections.

THE threatenings which are here denounced against *Jerusalem* by the prophet, after he had threatened the other nations, show, that God spares not his own people, and those who profess to serve him, when they offend him; and that the nations and cities where impiety reigns, are at last exposed to his vengeance, which nothing can secure them from. But what is chiefly to be observed here is, that one of the greatest signs of hardness of heart, and that which most provokes God to punish men, is their being insensible of his judgments, and giving themselves up to mirth and pleasures, and dissoluteness, at a time when he calls them to humiliation and repentance. *Isaiah's* prediction of *Shebna's* being turned out, and *Eliakim's* being preferred, proves, that what happens to private persons is directed by Providence, as well as what befals princes and nations; and that God exalts and abases whom he pleases, as may best answer his wise designs.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THIS chapter foretells the humbling of the *Tyrians* who were neighbours to the *Jews*, and prided themselves in their riches and power.

Reflections.

THE prediction contained in this chapter was fulfilled when *Nebuchadnezzar*, after a tedious siege, took the city of *Tyre*. It is remarkable, that the prophet, in this chapter, says expressly, that *Tyre* should be desolate seventy years; that at the end of that time it should be restored; that its trade should again flourish, and part of its riches be consecrated to God. All these things happened to the city of *Tyre:* After it had fallen under the power of the *Babylonians*, it recovered from its ruins, became very considerable, and enjoyed its liberty in the time of *Alexander* the Great: After this the *Jews* reaped many advantages from the *Tyrians*, and at last, the Gospel was preached in the land of *Tyre*. In all this, we see evident proofs of the divinity of these prophecies, and that Providence governs the world, and presides over all events.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THIS chapter treats of the extreme desolation of *Judea*, occasioned by the sins of the *Jews*. *Isaiah* promises, however, that *Jerusalem* should be restored.

Reflections.

IN this chapter we find a prediction of the miseries that threatened the *Jews*. *Isaiah* declares, that their land would shortly be entirely desolate, because it had been profaned and defiled by the sins of its inhabitants, and they had broken the divine covenant. By this we see what they have reason to expect who imitate the *Jews* in their rebellion and ingratitude: God at length puts in execution against them the decrees of his justice, and overwhelms them with his

judgments; but if he does not always punish the transgressors of his covenant and laws with temporal punishments, he will infallibly punish them in the life to come; since the threatenings of the Gospel are not less express, nor less certain, than those of the ancient prophets. On the other hand, the promises God here makes, to establish his kingdom, and again to manifest his glory at *Jerusalem*, after he had afflicted it, express God's mercy to his people. These promises concern us, as well as the *Jews*, since we see their perfect completion in the manifestation of *Jesus Christ*, and the establishment of his kingdom.

CHAPTER XXV.

THIS is a song of praise for the blessings which God would grant to his people, in delivering them, and humbling their enemies.

Reflections.

THE praises and thanksgivings contained in this chapter relate, first, to the deliverance of the *Jews*, and their return from *Babylon;* but they chiefly suit that great deliverance which the Messiah was one day to procure for men, by redeeming them, and purchasing salvation for them. We are chiefly to observe, after *St. Paul* and *St. John*, that these words of the prophet, *He will swallow up death in victory: and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces;* will not be fully accomplished till death, our last enemy, shall be destroyed by the resurrection, and *Jesus Christ* shall introduce his elect into eternal glory. This expectation ought to produce in us a great desire to partake of these excellent promises, and be a powerful motive to us, to bless the Lord who has promised them, and to be glad and rejoice continually in expectation of that salvation, which shall be fully revealed at the second coming of our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

CHAPTER XXVI.

I. *Isaiah* goes on to praise God for the blessings he would bestow on his people, and expresses the confidence which the righteous have in God. II. He represents how men abuse the forbearance of God; he adores his justice and power, which would appear in restoring peace to the *Jews*, after he had reduced them to the utmost extremity; and from all these considerations he comforts and encourages the people of God.

Reflections.

I. We ought to meditate with faith and gratitude upon what is said in this chapter, and in so many other prophecies, of the deliverance and peace which God would send his church, since these predictions principally relate to the times of the Gospel. II. We learn from this chapter that the character of true believers is to trust in God alone, to desire nothing but him, and to seek him with all the powers of the soul; and that God, on his part, supports them and guides them in the way that they should go, and takes care of every thing that relates to them. III. Another instruction that the prophet gives us is, that men commonly learn to fear God, and to do that which is right, when he chastises them, and they see his judgments; but that the wicked abuse the forbearance of God, and are hardened in their sins, when he shows them favour; and instead of being converted, become yet more wicked. Lastly, The assurances which the prophet gives the *Jews* of the divine protection, should effectually comfort the church, and all its true members, make them easy in the worst of times, and fill them continually with hope and joy.

CHAPTER XXVII.

God promises by his power to punish the enemies of the *Jews*, to be reconciled with his people, and to

bring the dispersed in *Assyria* and *Egypt* again to *Jerusalem*, there to worship the Lord.

Reflections.

We may gather from this chapter, I. That how great soever the power of the enemies of God be, he is more powerful than they, and will not fail to set bounds to their malice. II. That there is this difference between the afflictions with which God visits his church, and the judgments he displays against idolaters; that God afflicts his church in pure kindness, to cleanse and purify it: whereas he punishes the other in his wrath, and for their destruction. This goodness of the Lord appears in the promises here made to gather together the dispersed *Jews*, and to bring them again to *Jerusalem*, which actually came to pass after the captivity of *Babylon*. This teaches us, that God does never entirely withdraw his grace and protection from his people, and from those he loves; and that after he has afflicted and humbled them, he restores them to rest and peace, and gives them new proofs of his love, and fresh reason to celebrate his mercy.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

This is a prophecy against *Ephraim;* that is, against the kingdom of the ten tribes and against the kingdom of *Judah*. I. *Isaiah* foretells, that they should be delivered into the hands of their enemies because of their pride, their dissoluteness, and their idolatries. II. He reproaches the priests and the prophets for following the general corruption; for being as ignorant and wicked as the people; and for their false confidence, in thinking themselves secure from the judgments of God. III. He denounces those judgments against them, promising, nevertheless, that God would display his infinite power and wisdom in behalf of *Jerusalem;* and that as the ploughman, after he has prepared the earth, and sowed his seed, sets apart the good grain, so the Lord would spare the men of *Judah*, and not destroy them with the ungodly.

Reflections.

THE threatenings of *Isaiah* against the *Israelites* teach us, I. That the sins of men, and particularly pride, drunkenness, and dissoluteness, are the cause of those miseries which befal them, and of the chastisements which God inflicts upon them. II. That if these sins are displeasing to God in all persons, they are still more odious in the ministers of religion; and that ignorance and corruption, in those who ought to teach others, produce depravity in the people, and occasion the ruin and destruction of the church. III. It is to be observed, that *Isaiah* complains of the false confidence of the *Israelites*, who, at the very time the wrath of God was ready to fall upon them, in the profoundest security said, *We have made a covenant with death; and when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us.* Thus men flatter themselves in their sins, and think themselves safe, when God is preparing to surprise and overwhelm them with his judgments. IV. God shows his goodness, by promising to *lay in Sion, for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation.* This prophecy properly relates to *Jesus Christ*, and is several times applied to him in the New Testament, where it is said, that *Christ* is that corner-stone upon which the church is built, and which is an occasion of stumbling, and a rock of offence to unbelievers, and a means of salvation to all those that believe in him.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE prophet, in this and the following chapter, speaks of the coming of the *Assyrians*, who were to make war upon *Jerusalem*, and foretells, I. That that city, which he here calls *Ariel*, should in a short time be visited and besieged, but that God would disperse and confound those that made war against them. II. He says, that all these evils would be occasioned by the great hardness of heart, the blindness and security which reigned, even among the

prophets, and by the hypocrisy of the *Jews*. III. To these threatenings *Isaiah* joins promises of deliverance.

Reflections.

In this chapter we are to observe, I. That *Isaiah's* threatenings against *Jerusalem*, and against those who should attack it, were executed a few years after, when *Sennacherib* came to besiege that city, and was forced to retreat with the loss of his army. II. That it was the blindness of the prophets, and the hypocrisy of the *Jews*, which obliged God to use them in this manner. From hence we may conclude, that the ignorance and impiety of the governors of the church is always attended with great corruption: and that God abhors the worship we pay him, when it is only external and hypocritical. This is expressed in these words, which our Saviour likewise mentions in the Gospel: *This people draw near to me with their mouths, and honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.* III. We also learn from this chapter, that it is great folly, and extreme impiety, to pretend to hide ourselves from the eyes of the Lord, and to escape his knowledge and his power; and that nothing can screen us from his judgments, nor hinder him from disposing of us as the potter disposes of the clay. Lastly, God gives proof of his love and mercy to his people, in promising, after he had threatened them, to take pity on them, and restore them to a glorious condition.

CHAPTER XXX.

Isaiah denounces the utmost miseries against those *Jews*, who, instead of quietly waiting for the assistance of the Almighty against the *Assyrians*, had recourse to the *Egyptians*, who would not hearken to the prophets of the Lord, and would even hinder them from speaking. II. He assures them, they should be delivered if they trusted in God rather than in man; that God was ready to show them favour; that he would deliver them, and let

them see the destruction of the *Assyrians*, and that afterwards they should enjoy peace and happiness. This prosperity the prophet expresses, by saying, that then the light of the sun and moon should be much greater than usual, and by other figurative expressions.

Reflections.

THE completion of what is here read we find in the following chapters, wherein *Isaiah* relates what happened when the *Assyrians* came to make war upon *Jerusalem*. In the mean time we must make these three reflections on what we read in this chapter. I. The threatenings denounced by *Isaiah* against the *Jews*, who, instead of depending upon God alone, imagined they should be defended by the king of *Egypt*, teach us, that God does not bless those, who, in time of danger, have recourse to ill means for their deliverance, and who trust in men rather than in him. To this purpose the prophet says, *In rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.* II. *Isaiah's* sharp rebuke of the *Jews*, for refusing to obey the prophets, and for stopping their mouths, and not suffering them to speak, shows us, that it is a token of the greatest obstinacy not to hearken to the voice of God, nor suffer his servants to speak the truth. III. God expresses his great kindness when, regardless of the sins of the *Jews*, he tells them, he waited to be gracious unto them; that he would again have mercy on them, and protect *Jerusalem* and its inhabitants against the *Assyrians*. This kindness and mercy of God towards men should engage us chiefly to seek his favour, to rely on him alone, and to live in such a manner, that we may have him for our protector, and put our whole confidence in him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE prophet continues to threaten those who should seek for help from the *Egyptians* against the *Assyrians*, and to assure the *Jews* of the divine protection.

Reflections.

THE principal instruction to be drawn from this chapter is, that to put our confidence in man, rather than in the divine assistance, is to sin against God, and to deceive ourselves. As *Isaiah* said, that the *Egyptians* were men, and not God, we should always remember, that men are very weak, that all their power is but vanity, and that they who depend upon them shall be deceived in their expectation; whereas those who hope in God, and fear him, and rest wholly upon his power, are entirely safe. This the *Jews* should have acknowledged when *Sennacherib*, king of *Assyria*, came against *Jerusalem*. His approach and progress at first threw terror all around; but God confounded the enterprises of that prince, and, moved by the prayers of *Hezekiah*, who trusted in God alone, restored peace to *Jerusalem*, as we read in the sequel.

CHAPTER XXXII.

I. *Isaiah* describes the felicity which the *Jews* would enjoy under the reign of king *Hezekiah*, after the defeat and retreat of the king of *Assyria*, and he foretells that then good men should be exalted, and that unjust and wicked men should be abased. II. He applied himself to the women of *Jerusalem*, who lived in luxury and effeminacy, and warns them to bewail the calamities which were to fall upon them; promising, at the same time, that peace and prosperity should succeed sorrow and trouble, and that the judgments of God should fall heavy like hail upon the *Assyrians*.

Reflections.

THIS chapter affords us the same reflections as the former, upon the great deliverance that God was to grant to *Jerusalem* in *Hezekiah's* time. Besides, what *Isaiah* says, concerning the happiness and peace which the *Jews* should enjoy under the government of that king, after having been in extreme

danger, should make us sensible, that it is a great blessing to a nation to be subject to just and religious princes and magistrates. But it is a much greater happiness to have God for our protector, and to be assured of his assistance and favour in all our wants and necessities.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THIS is again a prophecy of the ruin of the *Assyrians*, who were to come against *Jerusalem*, and greatly alarm the *Jews* in the reign of *Hezekiah*. *Isaiah* promises, that this just and pious king should be blessed: that *Jerusalem* should be preserved by the power of God, and the army of *Sennacherib*, king of *Assyria*, destroyed.

Reflections.

THE first instruction this chapter affords us is, that all the designs, and all the attempts of the enemies of God and his church, are vain and ineffectual; that they cannot resist the power of the Lord, and that whatever they undertake against him, does only turn to his glory, and their confusion. It must further be considered, that the threatenings contained in this chapter relate in general to all wicked men, since God is to them a consuming fire. *Sinners are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites;* so that they shall say, *Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* These words present us with a lively image of the horror and despair which shall seize the wicked, when God shall come to judge them. Take notice likewise, that what *Isaiah* said of good king *Hezekiah*, agrees to all good men; and, as the prophet expresses it, *He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil, he shall dwell on high, and shall lack nothing.* In these words we see what are the characters of true piety, and the happy condition of its votaries. Lastly, From this chapter we

may conclude, that as God formerly delivered *Jerusalem*, when invaded by the *Assyrians*, he will constantly be the protector of the church, and of all that fear him; so that they may boldly say, *The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our law-giver, the Lord is our king, he will save us.*

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THIS chapter contains threatenings against the *Edomites*, whose ruin God denounces. *Isaiah* prophesies, that *Idumea* should be desolate; that kings should no longer reign there; and that it should be reduced to a wilderness.

Reflections.

THERE are two reflections to be made upon this chapter: I. That the *Edomites*, who were neighbours to the *Jews*, and who were descended from *Esau*, brother to the patriarch *Jacob*, were quite destroyed by the king of *Assyria*, some time after this prediction of *Isaiah;* that their country was made a wilderness, and that they never did recover from that desolation; so that the threatenings which *Isaiah* and other prophets had pronounced against them were put in execution. II. We are to take notice, that God dealt thus with them, because they, at all times, dealt wickedly with the *Jews*, who were their brethren, and because they rejoiced at their fall. Thus the destruction of *Idumea* is an example of God's judgment upon those that are cruel and unjust, and who wish ill to others, and rejoice in their miseries.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE prophet describes, in figurative expressions, the *Jews'* joy in their own deliverance, and the confusion of their enemies.

Reflections.

WHAT is here said relates first to the happy state of the *Jews*, when God delivered them from the invasion of the king of *Assyria*, and afterwards, when

they were brought again from the captivity of *Babylon*, whilst the *Edomites*, whose ruin *Isaiah* had foretold in the foregoing chapter, and their other enemies, were destroyed. This passage of the prophet is likewise to be applied to the Christian church, and to the blessings which God would bestow upon it, by the means of the Messiah redeeming and sanctifying the faithful, destroying their spiritual enemies, and conferring on them eternal happiness. The last words of this chapter express the sentiments of joy and gratitude which so great a deliverance produces in the hearts of all true believers.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE history contained in this and the following chapters proves the completion of the predictions set down in the foregoing chapters, which foretold, that God would deliver *Jerusalem* from the invasion of the *Assyrians*. *Sennacherib*, king of *Assyria*, makes war against *Hezekiah*, king of *Judah*, and after he had taken several cities from him, he sends *Rabshakeh* to *Jerusalem*, to summon *Hezekiah* and the *Jews* to surrender, and to blaspheme against God, saying, that as the gods of the nations which he had conquered had not been able to deliver their land, so neither would the god whom *Hezekiah* worshipped be able to deliver him. This same history is recorded in the sixteenth and following chapters of the Second Book of *Kings*.

Reflections.

WE must look upon the war which the king of *Assyria* made against *Hezekiah*, and the advantages which that idolatrous king obtained over him, as a punishment to *Hezekiah's* subjects, and a trial sent by God to this pious prince, to engage him and all his people to have recourse to him, and to give them afterwards extraordinary proofs of his power in delivering them from so great a danger. It is next to be observed, that the haughty and impious speeches

of *Sennacherib*, and his blasphemies against God, which so much astonished *Hezekiah*, hastened the ruin of that idolatrous king, and induced God to destroy him. When men fly in the face of the Almighty, and insult him with impious speeches, he fails not to set bounds to their insolence. This ought to inspire us with an utter abhorrence of every thing that affronts the Divinity; and particularly of blasphemy, and all other discourses that violate the reverence which is due to the great God whom we adore.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

I. *Hezekiah* acquaints *Isaiah* with the blasphemies of *Sennacherib*, king of *Assyria;* and the prophet assures him of God's assistance. II. *Sennacherib* is obliged to leave *Judea*, because the king of *Ethiopia* had declared war against him; and sends letters to *Hezekiah*, full of threatenings and blasphemies against God. III. *Hezekiah* carries these letters to the temple of the Lord, and implores his assistance. IV. *Isaiah* assures him from God, that the king of *Assyria* should not enter *Jerusalem*, but should return to his own country. V. An angel destroys the army of *Sennacherib;* who, being returned to his own country, is murdered by his own children.

Reflections.

We are to observe in this chapter, I. That *Hezekiah*, extremely alarmed by the threatenings of *Sennacherib*, had recourse to the intercession of *Isaiah;* carried to the temple the insulting letters which that idolatrous king had sent him; and offered up to God a prayer, full of sincere piety, firm confidence, and great zeal for the glory of God. Thus those who fear God have recourse to him, and the prayers of good men, in all their troubles. II. By the assurances *Isaiah* gave *Hezekiah* of the divine assistance, we learn, that what chiefly provoked the Lord was the extreme insolence of the king of *Assyria*, and his blasphemies;

and that God never fails to confound the proud and ungodly. *Isaiah's* message to *Hezekiah* expresses very strongly the pride of *Sennacherib*, and at the same time his weakness, and the power wherewith God would set bounds to his malice, by destroying him, and delivering *Jerusalem*. Lastly, it appears from this chapter, that *Isaiah's* promises and the confidence of *Hezekiah* were not in vain. Providence thought fit that *Tirhakah*, king of *Ethiopia*, should declare war against *Sennacherib*, to oblige him to retire from *Hezekiah's* dominions; the army of the *Assyrians* was miraculously defeated by an angel, and *Sennacherib* himself, at his return from this expedition, was assassinated by his sons in the temple of the idol whom he worshipped. In these events every one may see, that trust in God and prayers are very effectual; that the power of God is infinite; that he is just, and that sooner or later he punishes wicked princes, and in general all those who affront him by their impiety and their pride.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

KING *Hezekiah* being sick, *Isaiah* comes to acquaint him that he was to die; but God being moved by the prayers of this prince, promises him fifteen years longer life, and confirms the promise by a miracle. *Hezekiah*, being recovered, praises God in a song.

Reflections.

I. IT is to be observed that about the time *Hezekiah* had been attacked by the *Assyrians*, God visited him with a mortal disease. This was a new trial for that prince whom God loved, and which was to serve to manifest and strengthen his faith and piety. For the same reason God afflicts his children after divers manners, and after he has delivered them from one danger, suffers them sometimes to fall into another. II. The prayer which *Hezekiah* made to God in his

sickness, beseeching the Lord to remember, that he had walked before him in integrity, shows, that men apply to God with great confidence in time of adversity, and at the approach of death, when they have lived in holiness, and done that which is right in his sight. III. In the sudden healing of *Hezekiah*, and in the miracle God wrought for his sake, we may observe the power of God, his love to that prince, and the efficacy of the prayers of the righteous. Lastly, Those whom God has delivered from death, or any other danger, ought, in imitation of *Hezekiah*, who praises God in a song of thanksgiving, to celebrate his loving-kindness, to preserve the remembrance of it, and to employ their life to his glory.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE king of *Babylon* having sent ambassadors to *Hezekiah*, that prince showed them his treasures; which *Isaiah* reproved him for, and told him, that those treasures, and even his children, should be carried to *Babylon*.

Reflections.

THESE are the reflections which the Scripture makes on what is related in this chapter. When the ambassadors of the king of *Babylon* came to *Hezekiah*, to inquire after the miracle that had happened, when the shadow of the sun-dial of *Ahaz* went backward with the sun, God left *Hezekiah* to himself to try him; but *Hezekiah* rendered not unto God according to the benefit done unto him, for his heart was lifted up; therefore the wrath of God was kindled against *Jerusalem*. Upon which *Isaiah* told him, that his children and his treasures should be carried to *Babylon*; but *Hezekiah* and the inhabitants of *Jerusalem* humbling themselves, the wrath of God came not upon them in the days of *Hezekiah*.—We may learn from hence, how easily men forget themselves in

prosperity; and that those who have done their duty in time of affliction, often grow remiss when it is over. This history shows likewise, that worldly advantages are vain and uncertain, and that we should never be puffed up with the possession of them. Lastly, it appears from hence, that God chastises those he loves, when they grow remiss and offend him; but that he is reconciled, as soon as they repent and humble themselves.

CHAPTER XL.

I. THE prophet comforts the people of God, and assures them, God, whose word and promises are always sure, would deliver them. II. He exhorts them to rejoice at that great deliverance. III. He describes the infinite majesty, power, and wisdom of God, and the folly of those that worship idols. Lastly, He declares the happiness of those who worship the true God, and put their trust in him.

Reflections.

THE promises which God makes in this chapter, to comfort and redeem his people, are not to be explained only of the deliverance wrought by the *Jews*, in freeing them from the king of *Assyria*, and bringing them again from the *Babylonish* captivity; they chiefly relate to the times of the Gospel, and in particular to the coming of *John* the Baptist, who was sent by God to prepare men to believe in *Jesus Christ*. This we learn in the beginning of St. *John's* Gospel, where this prophecy is applied to *John* the Baptist: *The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.* To the same times must be referred what *Isaiah* says of the stability of the word of God, in opposition to men's insignificancy, as St. *Peter* teaches, when he, applying to the Gospel the words of *Isaiah*, says *All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth;*

but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is that word which by the Gospel is preached unto you. 1 Peter i. 25. What the prophet says in the latter part of this chapter is very remarkable; he there speaks of the majesty of God in exalted terms, and the most noble ideas; he represents in a lively manner the stupidity of idolaters, who worship dumb idols, which their own hands have framed; and describes the perfect happiness of those who put their trust in God alone. These discourses of the prophet teach us, that God abhors idolatry, and neither ought nor can be represented by any image; that we ought to adore and fear this great God, before whom all creatures are as nothing; and that all our happiness depends on his favour, and our trust in him.

CHAPTER XLI.

I. THE prophet addresses himself to the isles, that is, to the distant nations, and exhorts them to own the power of God, and the vanity of idols. II. He assures the *Israelites* of the divine protection; promising to make them triumph over their enemies, and to shower his favours upon them. Lastly, He shows, that the Lord was the only true God; and that the idols were only false divinities, because they could not foretell things to come; and promises that *Jerusalem* should be restored.

Reflections.

THIS chapter teaches us, I. That the Lord is the true God, who ought alone to be worshipped and adored; that his power is infinite; that he disposes of kings, and of all events; and that those who serve idols are mad. II. We here see the firmness of God's covenant with his ancient people, and his love to them; from whence we may conclude, that as the Christian church is not less dear to him, he will never forsake it; that whatever condition it be in, it has nothing to fear; and that the enemies of the church, far from compass-

ing its ruin, shall be themselves destroyed. III. We ought to take particular notice of the reason which the prophet gives to prove that idols were not gods; saying, that they could not foretell things to come, nor do any hurt or good to men. This consideration, which so strongly demonstrates the vanity of idols, most plainly shows, that the many prophecies we have in the Holy Scriptures, could proceed from none but God. It proves that there is a God, who knows and governs all things, and that the Holy Scriptures are true and divinely inspired. Lastly, This teaches us, that the great God, who knoweth and can do all things, is the Lord of all men, the judge of the world, and he who ought to be feared: since as he is almighty, he will exert his power for the good of those that worship him, and to punish those that rebel against him.

CHAPTER XLII.

I. *Isaiah* goes on to foretell the *Jews'* deliverance and restoration by *Cyrus;* but he chiefly speaks of the coming of the Messiah, to bestow his favours on the *Jews*, and also on the *Gentiles*. II. He exhorts men to praise God, and to rejoice in the happiness which they were shortly to enjoy. III. He foretells, that idolaters shall be confounded, and idolatry destroyed. IV. He complains of the blindness of the *Jews;* and declares, that because of their sins they should be delivered into the hands of their enemies.

Reflections.

St. *Matthew*, quoting the first verses of this chapter, teaches us, that this prophecy represents the characters of the Messiah; which are, his great meekness and humility, the glory of his works, and the power wherewith he was to establish his kingdom throughout all the nations of the earth. These are so many proofs that Jesus is the true Messiah promised by the prophets, and so many inducements to us, to submit ourselves with joy to this Saviour, abounding in

power and goodness. II. *Isaiah* expresses the sentiments of joy and gratitude which men would be affected with, when the Saviour of the world should be manifested: which are described in these words, *Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth. Ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles and the inhabitants thereof; let them give glory to the Lord, and declare his praise.* These are the thanks we ought to render incessantly to God, upon account of the good things he has done for us in *Christ Jesus;* and particularly, for delivering us from the idolatry which formerly reigned in the world. III. The example of the *Jews,* who were exposed to desolation because of their blindness and stupidity, is a warning to us, that it is sin which exposes men to so many evils, and engages God to forsake them, when they shut their eyes against the light which enlightens them, when they are deaf to his voice, and refuse to walk in his ways, and to keep his law.

CHAPTER XLIII.

I. GOD promises to deliver his people by his infinite power, and to bring them back from their dispersion. II. He declares that he is the only true God who created all things, and who made himself known to the *Jews;* and that he would not fail to gather them together again. III. He complains, that that people had not served him as they ought, and threatens to chastise them; but promises, however, to be reconciled with them, and to forgive them.

Reflections.

WE see in the first part of this chapter the love of God to the *Jews.* That love appears in the assurances he gives them of his protection, as being their God, their Saviour, and their King; and in the promises he makes them, of delivering them from the *Babylonish* captivity. These promises are likewise applicable to the Christian church, and to all the truly

faithful, and are very proper to comfort and fill them with hope and joy. The second part of this chapter affords us powerful motives to fear the Lord our God; since he is the Lord, and the only true God, that has been from all times, that has made all things, that knows what is to come, and does what he pleases, so that nothing can resist him, and from his hand nothing can deliver us. God's reproaching of the *Jews*, for having provoked and offended him by their sacrifices, and by the service they paid him, teaches us, that all worship which consists purely of ceremonies, and of the externals of religion, is abominable to the Lord. Lastly, The promises of pardon at the end of this chapter, show, that if God afflicts men for their correction, he is likewise always ready to show mercy to them, when they humble themselves; that it is he alone who pardons sins; and that he does it only for his own sake, and out of pure mercy.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THIS chapter contains, I. Express promises of the deliverance of the *Jews*, and of the favours which God would bestow upon them. II. A beautiful description of the folly of idolaters. III. An exhortation to the *Jews* to rejoice in the hopes that God would bring them out of captivity, and would settle them again in their own country by means of *Cyrus* king of *Persia*.

Reflections.

I. THE promises which God made to his people, to redeem them, to cause them to increase and multiply, and to bless them, began to be accomplished when he delivered the *Jews* from the captivity of *Babylon;* but they were perfectly fulfilled when God, according to his promise, sent his Son into the world to save mankind. Wherefore it is our duty to meditate upon these gracious promises with faith and gratitude; to rejoice in God, and return him thanks for

the completion of them. II. This chapter contains a description of the vanity of idols, which deserves to be read with care and attention. *Isaiah* represents the folly of those that worship images made of wood or other materials, and fall down before the work of their own hands, and before dead things. By which we see into what extravagances men are capable of falling, when left to themselves, and deprived of the light of the divine word; and what condition we should still be in, if we had not been delivered from idolatry, to serve the true and living God. This shows likewise with what respect and fear we ought to worship the Almighty God, who is the governor of the world, who knows all things; and as his power knows no bounds, can do good to those that reverence him, and punish those that offend him. The last verses of this chapter are remarkable; God therein promises, not only that the *Jews* should return from *Babylon*, and their city and temple be rebuilt; but he says, this should be done by means of a king named *Cyrus*; which accordingly came to pass about two hundred years after this prediction.

CHAPTER XLV.

In this chapter it is foretold, that there should arise a king named *Cyrus*, to whom God would give great power, and who should set the *Jews* at liberty, and send them back from *Babylon* into their own country. The prophet says, that God would do all this to manifest his power and love to his people; and to show, that the idols of the heathens were false gods; and that there was no other God besides the God of *Israel*.

Reflections.

This chapter contains one of the most express and most remarkable prophecies in the Old Testament. The purport of it is, that a king named *Cyrus* should become exceedingly powerful; that God would go before him, and grant him great victories; that he would give him immense riches, and the monarchy of *Asia*;

and that this prince would grant the *Jews* leave to return to their own country, and cause them to rebuild *Jerusalem*, and the temple. These things were foretold two hundred years before they happened: at the end of which time *Cyrus*, the king of *Persia*, destroyed the monarchy of the *Chaldeans*, and published an edict in behalf of the *Jews*, causing them to return to their own country. These predictions, which were so exactly fulfilled, invincibly prove the divine original of the Holy Scriptures, and the truth of religion. They prove that there is a God who knows things to come, and who presides over all events and every thing that happens in the world. They prove, in particular, that he disposes of things which depend upon the will of man, without depriving him of his liberty; so that men, without knowing it, bring about the designs of Providence. By this the true God is distinguished from idols, as is observed several times in this and the former chapters. From the whole we must conclude, that God alone is to be feared and adored; that he disposes all things with wisdom; and that the end he proposes to himself in all his works, is to make himself known to men, and to engage them to serve and fear him. This appeared still plainer in the accomplishment of the promises made of sending *Jesus Christ*, and establishing his kingdom.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Isaiah foretells, that the *Babylonians* should be destroyed; and that it should then appear, that *Bel* and *Nebo*, which were their idols, were nothing but false gods; and that the Lord was the protector of the *Jews*, and the only true God. The prophet adds, that God would bring from the east a man, who should execute the designs of his Providence: by which he denotes *Cyrus*, who would come from *Persia*, to subdue the *Babylonians*, and set the *Jews* at liberty.

Reflections.

WHAT is here said of the destruction of *Babylon*, was fulfilled when that city was taken, and the empire of the *Babylonians* passed to the *Medes* and *Persians*. God himself declares, that this great event would be an illustrious proof to the *Jews*, and to all nations, that the gods of the heathens were but dead idols; that he alone was the Almighty; that futurity was perfectly known to him; and that nothing could hinder the execution of his designs. We discover, likewise, in the destruction of *Babylon*, God's love to his people, and the truth of his promises. God here assures the *Jews*, that as he had taken care of them from the beginning, he would always be the same to them; from whence we may conclude, that God will never cease to love and protect his church, and that it is not possible he should forget his own people. This chapter contains likewise a remarkable description of the madness of idolaters, who after they had made images of gold or silver, fell down before them, and implored the assistance of the gods, who could neither stir from their place, nor hear them, nor deliver them. From whence we learn, that idolatry is the greatest insult that can be offered to the Deity, and at the same time the greatest error that men can possibly fall into.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Isaiah continues to prophecy against *Babylon*. He foretells, that God would humble the pride of the *Babylonians;* and that after he had delivered his people into their hands to be chastised by them, he would strip them of their power and glory which they were so proud of; and would punish them for the barbarities they had exercised against his people, for their pride, their idolatry, and other crimes.

Reflections.

WE are to consider on this chapter, I. That God

disposes of all things, and particularly of the most powerful kings and states, with an irresistible power, and at the same time with perfect justice. This appeared formerly in the abasement and destruction of *Babylon*, which came to pass according to the predictions of *Isaiah*. II. It appears, that these things engaged God to punish the *Babylonians*, their pride, their inhuman treatment to the *Jews*, and their idolatry. Therefore we cannot doubt that these sins expose men, in a particular manner, to the wrath of God. This proves too, that God is the judge of the world; that he alone is to be feared; and that he is engaged by his goodness and justice to do good to those that serve him, and study to please him.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

I. *Isaiah* tells the *Jews*, that God had forewarned them of what was coming upon them, that they might renounce idolatry, confess that he was the only God, and be converted and turn unto him. II. He tells them, that God for his own sake, and for the glory of his name, would not entirely destroy them; but would execute his judgments and threatenings on the *Babylonians*, their enemies. III. That if they had hearkened to the voice of God, they would not have been delivered up to the *Babylonians;* that nevertheless God would redeem them, and bring them again from *Babylon;* but that there should be no peace for their enemies, nor for the wicked in general.

Reflections.

This chapter shows, I. That God manifests himself to men, and makes known his will to them, and his purposes, as far as it is necessary, to teach them to fear him, and to render them happy. II. It is to be well observed, that God says here, he had declared things to come, long before they happened, to convince the *Jews* that he was the only true God, and to turn them from the worship of idols. This consideration, which God proposes in so many places

of this Book, and in the other prophets, deserves our most serious reflections. God could not more expressly declare, that one of the clearest ways in which he has revealed himself to mankind, ~~are~~ the predictions of the prophets: which, with the strongest evidence, proves that there is a God and a Providence, which governs all things: Therefore we ought to give particular heed to this proof, that we may, by this means, be confirmed in the belief of the truth of religion, and the practice of our duty. III. The third instruction is, that if men, on their part, would act suitably to what God does for them, they would enjoy perfect happiness, and would not compel him, as it were, to punish them. God shows his favourable dispositions to men in these expressions; *I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way thou shouldst go. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.* Lastly, It appears from this chapter, that, if God is engaged to punish men, he withdraws his scourge from them as soon as he observes them humbled. Thus he acted towards the *Jews*, when he sent them into captivity, and afterwards brought them again in peace.

CHAPTER XLIX.

I. *Isaiah* proclaims the glorious restoration of the *Jews*, and at the same time the coming of the Messiah, who should bring salvation and deliverance to all nations; and promises the *Jews*, that God would set them at liberty, by freeing them from the *Babylonish* captivity. II. He invites all creatures to rejoice at the prospect of so great salvation; he comforts the *Jews* who might have thought themselves forsaken of God; he assures them, that the Lord would protect and restore them, multiply them exceedingly, procure them the favour of strange princes, and would make their glory visible to all people, by subduing their oppressors.

Reflections.

WHAT is said in this chapter was in part fulfilled, when, about two hundred years after these predictions, the *Jews* were recalled from the *Babylonish* captivity, God then displayed in a glorious manner his power in the sight of all nations: he gave his people strange princes for their protectors, such as *Cyrus*, *Darius*, and several others; he gathered them together in their own country, and caused them there to increase and multiply, and blessed them exceedingly. But these promises more especially relate to the Christian church. Here we see clearly the calling of the Gentiles, and the marvellous increase of the church of *Christ*. This St. *Paul* teaches us, when, to convince the *Jews* that the Gospel was to be preached to the heathens, he cites the prophecy taken from this chapter: *I have set thee to be a light to the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth*, Acts xiii. 47; and when the same apostle applies likewise to the times of the Gospel these other words of *Isaiah*, *In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation*, 2 Cor. vi. 2. In that happy time the church saw her sons multiply; and the kings and great men of the world submitted to the Almighty God, and came into the number of his worshippers. All who have the happiness to be members of the church should be sensible of the value of these privileges, and possess them with gratitude and thankfulness. Christian princes, in particular, ought to learn from hence, that their greatest glory consists in knowing God, in belonging to his church, in being the defenders and nursing fathers of it, and in using their power to make it flourish more and more. Lastly, we have here the strongest assurances of God's care and love for his people; God declares that though a woman may forget her sucking child, he will never forget his church, which he has graven upon the palms

of his hands. These are promises full of comfort to the church in general, and to all its true members.

CHAPTER L.

I. *Isaiah* made use of the comparison of a woman who had been divorced from her husband, to show the *Jews*, that if they had been rejected, it was because they had forsaken God; that, however, God was able to deliver them, since he was governor of the world, and nothing could resist his power. II. He mentions the troubles which he had been exposed to in the discharge of his ministry, and expresses his firm confidence in God.

Reflections.

WHAT *Isaiah* says to the *Jews* in this chapter, should lead us to observe, I. That God never forsakes men, till they have first forsaken him, and that their sins interrupt the flow of his mercies towards them. II. That if the *Jews* were justly rejected for not hearkening to the voice of God and his prophets, our condemnation will be much more severe, if we hearken not to the voice of *Jesus Christ*. III. The ministers of the Lord may learn from what happened to *Isaiah*, that they may expect to meet with much opposition in the discharge of their office; but that, however, they are not to leave their calling; for God will support them, and all who labour and suffer for his sake. Lastly, We see, in the second part of this chapter, a representation of the contradictions *Jesus Christ* was exposed to, of the insults he received from his crucifiers, and the glorious and happy issue of all his labours, when God raised him from the dead, and established his kingdom, in spite of all opposition from the world.

CHAPTER LI.

I. THE prophet promises the *Jews*, that as God had blessed *Abraham* and *Sarah*, by giving them a numerous posterity, he would also comfort and in-

crease them after their captivity; would give them reason to rejoice, and for their deliverance would exert the same power which he had formerly shown against *Rahab*, that is, against *Egypt*, when he delivered their fathers, and made a way for them in the *Red Sea*. II. He exhorts them to trust in God, who would not fail to comfort *Jerusalem*, raising it from its ruins after it had been destroyed by the *Chaldeans*, and then to destroy the *Chaldeans* themselves, for all the mischiefs they had brought upon the *Jews*.

Reflections.

It must be observed, I. That according to the promises contained in this chapter, God did restore the *Jews*, after he had afflicted them, and displayed his Almighty power in their behalf, when he redeemed them from the captivity of *Babylon*. II. What is here said, tends very much to the consolation of the church in general. God's tender affection to the *Jewish* nation suffers us not to doubt but he loves also the church of his own Son; and that if he afflicts it, he is nevertheless always its protector. III. The prophet teaches us not to fear men, though they appear ever so formidable, since they are but mortals, and the Lord is infinitely more powerful than they. IV. What is here said of the joy with which the *Jews* should be filled, when the Lord brought them out of *Babylon*, is to be looked upon as a type of that great joy which *Jesus Christ* would produce in the world. But it must likewise be observed, that this joy only belongs to the righteous, and that the consolations we read of in this chapter are only intended for the true people of God, for those that seek the Lord, and hear his voice, and have his law engraven in their hearts; but these promises do by no means relate to the ungodly, whom God has threatened to give to drink of the cup of his fury, and to overtake them with his judgments.

CHAPTER LII.

The prophet continues to promise, that God would

restore *Jerusalem*. He assures them that God would work wonders for their deliverance in the sight of all the earth, and bring them from *Babylon* with great joy.

Reflections.

THIS prophecy has two views: The first was, the deliverance of the captive *Jews* from *Babylon;* and in this respect these predictions were fulfilled when *Cyrus* put an end to their captivity, and they left the idolatrous nations to return to *Jerusalem*, there to worship God as before. The second and chief design of this prophecy was to foretell the redemption of mankind by *Jesus Christ*, and that the happy news of this redemption, and of the coming of the kingdom of God, should be published throughout the world by the apostles. This St. *Paul* teaches us, when he applies to the preaching of the Gospel these words of *Isaiah: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Sion, Thy God reigneth!* It is evident, from this chapter, I. That it is the duty of those, to whom the Gospel is preached, to bless God, for having accomplished these noble promises; and to receive with joy and thankfulness the glad tidings of salvation which have been declared to them by the apostles and ministers of *Jesus Christ*. II. That it is the duty of all such to separate themselves from the world, and from all its pollutions, and to sanctify themselves, that they may serve God with a pure heart, living in innocence, and in a manner answerable to those inestimable blessings which God has conferred on them by his Son *Jesus Christ*.

CHAPTER LIII.

THIS prophecy describes the humiliation and death of the Messiah; as also the glory to which God would exalt him after his resurrection.

Reflections.

NOTHING can more clearly or more expressly represent the state of humiliation through which the Messiah was to pass, nor his state of exaltation and glory, than this admirable prophecy. The spirit of God here foretells, that the Messiah should appear in a mean condition; that, for this reason, he should be despised and rejected by the *Jews;* that he should take our sins upon him; that he should, by his death, atone for them; that he should be numbered with the transgressors; and that he should be honourably interred after his death. We see likewise described in this prophecy the perfect innocence of our Lord, and his patience under all the injuries and affronts he received. Lastly, the prophet foretells, that after the Messiah was made an offering for sin, he should see his seed, he should prolong his days. The meaning of which is, that his death should be followed by his resurrection and exaltation to glory; that he should gather together his church; that he would justify those that should believe in him, and would establish his kingdom in the world. This prophecy, which presents us with a view of the principal circumstances of the passion of *Jesus Christ,* should fully convince us that he is the great Redeemer spoken of by the prophets; that his doctrine is true and divine; that his sufferings and death are the wonderful means by which God has been pleased to save men; and that being now exalted in glory, he is able to save all those who come unto God by him, and obey him.

CHAPTER LIV.

I. *Isaiah,* under the similitude of a barren woman, to whom God would give children, and of a wife forsaken by her husband, and afterwards restored to favour, represents God's love to the *Jews,* which would engage him to increase and bless them after their return from the captivity. II. He assures them, that God would no more be in wrath with his people:

and, as he promised *Noah*, after the flood, never more to drown the earth, so he would never more deliver them into the hands of their enemies; that he would restore *Jerusalem* to a glorious state, and would disappoint and bring to nought all the contrivances and attempts formed against it.

Reflections.

We see, in this chapter, how the prophet comforted the *Jews*, by promising them that God, after he had chastised them, and reduced them to a small number, would bring them again from *Babylon*, would greatly increase them, and place them in a glorious state, giving them proofs of his love, and defeating all the designs and contrivances formed against them by their enemies. These promises do not terminate in the re-establishment of the *Jews*; their principal aim is to represent what God intended to do for his church, and what was to happen in the days of the Messiah, when the church should be spread abroad throughout all the world, and be enlarged by the conversion of the Gentiles; when God would make an everlasting covenant with it; and, though it was afflicted and persecuted, God would defend it against all the enterprises of its enemies; so that, as our Lord says, the gates of hell should not prevail against it. The truth of these predictions has appeared in the wonderful establishment of the Christian church, and in its preservation in the midst of so many dangers and persecutions to which it has been exposed; but the church's glory will appear in more splendour when it shall be spread over all the earth, and the kingdom of God be fully manifested. These reflections should make us sensible of our own happiness, in being members of the church; and should engage us continually to pray to God for the entire accomplishment of these glorious promises.

CHAPTER LV.

I. The prophet after he had foretold the happy re-

storation of the people of God, invites men to receive the mercies he offered them, and to be converted. II. He speaks of the efficacy of the word of God, and of the firmness of his promises made to the *Jews*.

Reflections.

THIS chapter teaches us, I. That God is so kind as to invite men to partake of his favours, and even solicits them strongly to receive them. Here let us consider that these invitations are particularly directed to us in the Gospel, where God offers us the most valuable blessings in his Son. II. We here see, that when God calls us, it is our duty to receive with readiness and thankfulness the offers he is graciously pleased to make us; and that instead of labouring after that which satisfieth not, we should apply all our care to the attainment of true riches. III. The way to obtain these is, to hearken to the voice of *Jesus Christ*, whom God has given for our ruler and guide; to seek the Lord whilst he is to be found, to call upon him whilst he is near us, to turn away from iniquity, and be converted to God. Lastly, The prophet assures us, that by this means we shall obtain from God the pardon of our sins, and the effects of his mercy; and shall experience the truth of the promises which he has made us in his word.

CHAPTER LVI.

I. THE prophet exhorts the *Jews* to the practice of virtue, and particularly to the keeping of the Sabbath. II. He foretells, that strangers, and those who were not admitted to all the privileges of the *Israelites*, by the law of *Moses*, should be admitted into the house of God, and offer him their sacrifices and their prayers; the meaning of which was, that God would receive all people and nations indifferently into his covenant. III. He threatens the *Jews* with destruction, and laments the extreme corruption of their rulers.

Reflections.

THIS chapter affords us these three instructions:

I. That what God requires of us, above all things, is to do that which is right, to keep his law, and not to profane his covenant and service. *Isaiah* teaches us, that this is what God chiefly regards, and that all those who discharge these duties are accounted his people, whatever their condition be in other respects. This point St. *Peter* has perfectly cleared up, when he says, *I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.* II. The next reflection relates to the happiness enjoyed by many nations, who have now the privilege to be admitted into covenant with God, which formerly they were excluded from, and the lively sense of gratitude which we ought to entertain for so great a favour conferred on us. Lastly, Let us consider the complaints which *Isaiah* makes against the rulers of the *Jews*, whom he calls *blind and sleepy watchmen*, and *dumb greedy dogs:* to signify their unfaithfulness in conducting the people, their neglect of duty, and thinking of nothing but their own interest, and the gratifying their inclinations. This should serve for a warning to those whom God has set over his church, as well as to magistrates. When such persons want understanding, or zeal, when they are effeminate, careless, or addicted to their interests, or pleasures, they not only expose themselves to the wrath of God, but also bring ruin and desolation upon the church.

CHAPTER LVII.

I. *Isaiah* reproaches the *Jews* with their stupidity and hardness of heart, which appeared in their not observing that the death of good men was a presage of their destruction. II. He reproves them for continuing to commit their idolatries under trees, and in the high places, notwithstanding the warnings they had received, and threatenings which God had denounced against them; and for seeking help from man, instead of trusting in God only. III. He promises, however, that the *Jews* should return from

the captivity; he comforts the humble persons that were among the *Jews*, preaching peace to such; but he declares, that there is no peace for the wicked.

Reflections.

We may make these four reflections upon this chapter: I. That God often takes good men out of this world, that they may not be involved in the miseries that are to fall upon the wicked; that when the righteous die, they go into a state of peace and rest; and that their death is sometimes followed with many calamities. This they had an instance of in good king *Josiah*, whom God took to himself before the destruction of the *Jews*. II. That if God complained so often of the obstinacy of the *Jews*, who continued to provoke him by giving themselves up to idolatry; he will be much more offended with us, if we do not serve him faithfully, but forsake him, though we have so many reasons to engage us to fear him, and continue faithful to him. III. We learn, that God dwells in humble and contrite hearts; and therefore if any one desires to have communion with God, he must renounce himself, and be lowly in his own sight. The last reflection relates to the sad condition of the wicked; God declares that there is no peace for them, and that they are in continual trouble and uneasiness. This is the usual state of a guilty conscience, which the wicked experience sooner or later; this ought likewise to inspire us with a great aversion to wickedness and impiety.

CHAPTER LVIII.

God commands *Isaiah* to reprove the *Jews* severely for their sins, and especially for the hypocrisy of their fastings; he shows what sort of fasts are acceptable to God; and says, the Lord hears, delivers, and blesses those that call upon him with sincerity and humility, and truly turn to him.

Reflections.

THIS chapter teaches us, what fasts God accepts, and what he rejects. God here declares very expressly, that he is offended with the services, and with the fastings of the wicked; that he has no regard to the humiliation of sinners, when it is only external and hypocritical, or lasts but a short time; but that the true way of fasting and praying is to humble ourselves before God, to afflict our souls, to reform our lives, to do justice, to repair the evil we have committed, to exercise charity, and to serve God with fidelity, love, and reverence. The prophet assures us, that God never fails to hear and deliver such as pray and fast after this manner, and to shower his blessings upon them. Lastly, He teaches us that the way to make God propitious, and to enjoy peace and quiet at all times, is to renounce our own wills, to resign them absolutely to the will of God, to seek all our joy in him alone, to reverence religion and to place our greatest happiness in serving God, and honouring his holy name. Let us seriously reflect upon these things at all times, but especially when we present ourselves before God, to perform any of the duties of piety and religion.

CHAPTER LIX.

I. THE prophet tells the *Jews* that if God did not avert the calamities that were to fall upon them, it was not for want of power, but because of their sins and corruption, the greatness of which he here describes. II. He represents the miseries and calamities with which God would shortly punish them. III. To these threatenings he adds such promises as give them reason to hope that God would have compassion on them, and send a deliverer to them that should be converted.

Reflections.

To make a good use of this chapter the following things are to be observed: I. That if God punishes

men, and leaves them exposed to sufferings, it is not for want of power or goodness to do good to them, and to deliver them, but their sins make the separation between God and them. II. That by a sincere return to God, men may render him propitious, and infallibly recover his favour. III. Great notice is to be taken of the description here given of the corruption of the *Jews*, of the disorder of their actions and words, of the injustice and violence committed among them; and particularly of the prophet's complaint, that good men are very few in number; that nobody durst undertake to defend a righteous cause, nor oppose the wicked; and that if any one desired to keep himself from evil, he was immediately persecuted by the wicked. When a nation is arrived to such a pitch of corruption, we may imagine the evil is at its height, and that punishment will quickly follow; this appears from the threatenings contained in this chapter, and from that which happened to the *Jews*. As to the promises which the Lord here makes of sending a Redeemer, and of pouring his Spirit upon his people, it must be considered, that they principally relate to *Jesus Christ*, who was to be sent by God for the salvation of the *Jews*, and of all men; but they were made only on behalf of such as should be converted from their sins; and by no means for the hardened and impenitent.

CHAPTER LX.

Isaiah describes the glorious and happy state of the church after his restoration. He prophesies, that kings and strange nations, who had afflicted the *Jews*, should honour and protect them; that they should come together from all parts to worship the true God, and to be joined to his people, and to enter into covenant with him; and that the church, thus blessed by God, should then enjoy perfect happiness.

Reflections.

THIS prophecy should be considered in three views.

I. As it relates to the happy restoration of the *Jews*, after the captivity of *Babylon*. That nation was then seen assembling together from all parts to re-build *Jerusalem*, and to increase and multiply in it; then it was that strange kings, as *Cyrus*, *Darius*, and *Artaxerxes*, protected the *Jews*, honoured their religion, contributed towards restoring the divine service, and even some of them came to pay their homage to the God of *Israel*. II. These prophecies are yet more applicable to the Christian church, which has been gathered out of all people, and in which so many kings and nations of the earth have placed all their glory, by embracing the service of the true God. These remarkable events, which we are witnesses of, prove to all the world, that God formerly spake by the prophet *Isaiah*, and that we have great reason to acknowledge and admire the power of God, and the faithfulness of his promises. Lastly, This prophecy, being taken in its most perfect sense, represents the most glorious state of the church, when the kingdom of God shall be fully manifested, and shall be received into his glory. This St. *John* teaches us, when he applies to the heavenly *Jerusalem* the words we have now read: *And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it.* Rev. xxi. 23. And chap. xxii. 5. *And the nations of them which are saved, shall walk in the light of it; for the Lord giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.*

CHAPTER LXI.

In this chapter, *Isaiah*, under the type of the deliverance and restoration of the *Jews*, speaks of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, wherewith the Messiah was to be invested; of the design of his coming, and of his ministry; which was to be the redemption and sanctification of his church; and of the joy which the church would then receive.

Reflections.

It appears from this chapter, that God was to send

a great prophet, who was to be filled with the Spirit of God, to bring glad tidings of salvation to men, and deliver them from the slavery of sin; and that by him God would make an everlasting covenant with them. This prophecy relates to *Jesus Christ*, who is that great prophet who was anointed with the Spirit of the Lord, to preach the Gospel to men, to proclaim *liberty to the captives*, and to publish the *acceptable year of the Lord*. This appears from the fourth chapter of St. *Luke*, where we are told, that when the Lord read in the synagogue of *Nazareth* this place of the prophet *Isaiah*, he said, that this prophecy was fulfilled in him. But this same prophecy teaches us, that these valuable blessings are only reserved for the meek and humble; for those that are broken-hearted, and earnestly desire the grace of God. This must be the estate of those, who expect to share in the blessings which *Jesus Christ* has purchased for us, and in that joy which the church shall experience when its Redeemer cometh.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE prophet continues to foretell that God would redeem his church, which, though it seemed forsaken of God, should again be in a glorious state, and no more delivered into the hands of its enemies. He prophesies of the coming of the Redeemer, and exhorts men to prepare for his reception.

Reflections.

IN this chapter we learn, I. That God's love to his church will not suffer him to forsake it; that he loveth it as the bridegroom loves his bride, and that it will ever be the object of his care and protection. II. That it is the duty of all those who are concerned for the glory of God, to pray continually for the prosperity of the church. III. God here promises to send his people a Saviour to redeem them, and place them in a glorious state on earth. The truth of these promises appeared first in the return of the

Jews from the captivity of *Babylon*, when *Jerusalem* was rebuilt, and afterwards in the coming of *Jesus Christ* the Saviour of the world, and in the establishment of his church. Lastly, At the hearing of these comfortable promises we are bound to bless God, who has fulfilled them in our behalf, and to endeavour to make suitable returns for the happiness we enjoy, of being members of his church, which is his spouse, of being his people, whom he hath redeemed, and for whom he hath prepared a place of glory and happiness in his kingdom.

CHAPTER LXIII.

I. THE prophet describes, in figurative terms, the judgments God would exercise upon the enemies of the *Jews*, and, in particular, upon the *Edomites*, and upon *Bozrah*, one of their cities. II. He represents what God had done for his people, when he delivered them out of *Egypt* by *Moses*, and at other times; and he complains of their rebellion and ingratitude. III. He adds a prayer, imploring God's mercy on the *Jews*.

Reflections.

I. THE destruction of the *Edomites*, which happened some time after *Isaiah* had foretold their ruin, is a proof of the truth and divinity of this prediction, as well as of the justice of God on those idolatrous nations, who had done great injuries to the kingdom of *Judah*. II. We must consider, that if the prophet gave thanks to God on this occasion, for the care he had always taken of his people *Israel*, we have still more reason to bless him for the victory which *Jesus Christ* has gained over our spiritual enemies, by the shedding his blood for us, and by his glorious resurrection. In this view, we may say with *Isaiah: I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has bestowed on us, and the great goodness towards the house of Israel, which he had bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the*

multitude of his loving-kindnesses. III. When we hear how *Isaiah* reproached the *Jews* for their ingratitude towards God, and for rebelling against him, after so many wonders he had done for them and for their fathers; we should call to mind what God hath done for us, and should give better proof of our gratitude than the *Jews* did. IV. There are two things to be remarked in the prayer at the end of this chapter. One is, that as *Isaiah* beseeched God to have compassion on *Jerusalem* for the glory of his name, notwithstanding the unworthiness of the *Jews;* so the mercy of God, and the stability of his covenant and promises, should be the foundation of all our confidence. The other remark is, that these words, *O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear?* do not imply, that God was the cause and author of the wickedness of the *Jews;* they mean only that God, seeing their obstinacy and wilful hardness of heart, had suffered them to go astray, and in just judgment upon them had left them to themselves.

CHAPTER LXIV.

A PRAYER, wherein the prophet beseeches God to manifest his glory and majesty in the sight of all men; and, for the deliverance of his people, to work miracles in their behalf, like those he had formerly wrought for them. He then entreats him not to remember their sins, and to pity the deplorable state *Jerusalem* and the temple were going to be reduced to by the *Babylonians.*

Reflections.

I. THE description in this chapter of God's sovereign power, and the proofs he formerly gave of it, should induce us to reverence and fear that Almighty Being, whose power none can resist, who has, in all ages, done so great things for the deliverance of those that trust in him, and has always made the wicked feel the effects of his justice. II. As *Isaiah*

formerly prayed for the deliverance of the *Jews*, all those who love God and his church, should, without ceasing, offer up devout prayers in its behalf, and beseech him, above all, to display his power and strength in its sanctification, to extend it throughout all the earth, and to manifest himself to those that know him not. And as the prophet, interceding for the *Jews*, acknowledged they were guilty and defiled, and yet besought God to pity their sad condition, and to remember they were his people, and the work of his hands; so we ought to offer up our prayers to God, with profound humility, and a sincere acknowledgment of our own sins and unworthiness, and to place all our hopes in his mercy only, in the promises he has given, and the covenant he has made with us in *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

CHAPTER LXV.

I. THE Lord declares, that he would call the Gentiles to the knowledge of himself, and cast off the *Jews*, because of their rebellion, and particularly for the idolatry with which they were defiled. II. Nevertheless, he foretells that *Jerusalem* should be rebuilt, that the *Jews* should dwell in their own land, that the cattle should feed upon *Sharon* and *Achor*, which were fruitful pastures; and that God should heap his blessings upon them, whilst the rebellious and idolatrous *Jews* were abandoned to his vengeance. Lastly, God promises to create new heavens and a new earth, and to cause righteousness and peace to reign among them.

Reflections.

I. GOD here promises to make himself known to those who sought him not, and to a people that did not call upon his name. This prophecy expressly denotes, that God would make himself known to the heathen; as St. *Paul* shows, when he cites these words in the Epistle to the *Romans*. II. God threatens to reject the *Jews*, because they had pro-

voked him by their idolatry, and continual disobedience. This threatening was put in execution, when *Jerusalem* fell under the power of the *Babylonians*, and the *Jews* were carried into captivity. So severe a punishment should make rebellious and ungrateful Christians dread the most severe effects of the Divine vengeance. III. This chapter instructs us, that God, in the execution of his judgments, always makes a difference between the wicked and his faithful servants; and that the wicked have nothing but shame and grief for their portion. IV. It is here foretold, that *God would create new heavens, and a new earth; and that the wolf and the lamb should feed together;* which signifies not only that God was going to alter the state of *Jerusalem* and of the *Jews*, by delivering them from captivity, and restoring peace; but that God would soon renew the world, and re-unite all men in his church. This renovation of all things began with the preaching of the Gospel, and will be still more fully completed in the latter days. Upon this the apostle teaches us, that since *all things are become new, and we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, we ought to be new creatures, and study to be without spot, and blameless.* Lastly, From hence it appears, that Christ's design was to re-unite all men in his church, and to make them live in unity and concord; and therefore that his kingdom is a kingdom of peace, that Christians ought not to hurt one another, and that their character should be mutual love, peace, forbearance, and charity.

CHAPTER LXVI.

I. God declares in an extremely affecting manner, that he rejected the sacrifices and external worship of the *Jews;* and that he would soon severely punish their hypocrisy and disobedience. II. He promises to restore peace to *Jerusalem,* to give it many children, to heap his blessings upon it, and above

all, to sanctify it; and threatens the wicked with eternal ruin.

Reflections.

THE first part of this chapter teaches us, I. That God, being the Creator of the world, dwells not in temples made with hands; that he is not honoured by a worship that is merely external; that he accepts none but those that can come to him with an humble spirit, and who tremble at his word; and that without these dispositions, all acts of divine worship, even those he has established and commanded, such as were under the law, sacrifices of sheep and oxen, oblations and incense, are so far from pleasing him, that they become an abomination to him. II. The promises which God made to redeem his people, to multiply them, and to pour down his blessings upon them, were all accomplished, when the *Jews* were gathered from the several countries of the world to *Jerusalem*, and the divine worship restored. But these promises especially declare, that the Gentiles should enter into the church of Christ, which also came to pass. Herein we should acknowledge the truth and faithfulness of God, as well as his mercy towards us. However, we must likewise carefully remember, that God declares several times in this chapter, that these promises, and these blessings, are only for the faithful and elect; and that he would display his vengeance upon the wicked and unbelieving. From whence it appears, that it is only by faith and obedience that we can be made partakers of that salvation and glory, which *Isaiah* and the other prophets have promised, and which have been purchased for us by *Jesus Christ*, to whom be praise and adoration for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The End of the Book of the prophet Isaiah.

THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH.

ARGUMENT.

Jeremiah, who was a priest and prophet, prophesied from the 13th year of king Josiah, till after the taking of Jerusalem, which was about the space of 45 years. This book is writ with a great deal of plainness, and at the same time with great strength and energy. It is partly historical and partly prophetical. We meet with several prophecies in it concerning the ruin of the Jews, their return from the Captivity, the destruction of the Babylonians, and of some other kingdoms; the calling of the Gentiles, and the new covenant that God would make with mankind by Jesus Christ. We have here likewise a relation of the sufferings Jeremiah himself underwent, and of several things that happened to him before, and after, the taking of Jerusalem; as also an account of what passed during the siege and taking of that city, and of the state of the Jews that dwelt in Judea, and who retired into Egypt, after that Jerusalem was taken by the Chaldeans.

CHAPTER I.

THIS chapter consists of three parts. I. *Jeremiah* gives an account in what manner he was called to the office of a prophet, the reasons he gave to be excused from it, and God's command to obey his call. II. *Jeremiah* relates two visions which he saw; the first of which was, the vision of an almond-tree beginning to bud, which signified that the destruction of *Jerusalem* was near; and the second, which was a seething pot towards the north, showed, that this desolation would come from the north, that is, from *Babylon*. III. We here see the promises God gave *Jeremiah* of his assistance and protection.

Reflections after reading the Chapter.

I. LET us make one general reflection on this Book, which is, that God in his great goodness sent *Jeremiah* to the *Jews* to exhort them to repentance, and to warn them of their approaching destruction. II. It must be remarked, that *Jeremiah* was called to be a prophet when he was yet young; that at first he was afraid to take this office upon him, and would have excused himself from it, but that, when God commanded him, he obeyed the call. From whence it appears, that *Jeremiah* did not take this office upon himself of his own choice, but in obedience to the will of God, and with profound humility. As it is God alone who is to send his ministers, so those whom he calls ought to be sensible of their weakness; but they ought nevertheless to obey his voice, and to rely upon his assistance. The two visions of *Jeremiah* gave him to understand, that the chief design of his ministry was, to denounce the approaching ruin of *Jerusalem*. Thus the servants of God are sent, not only to deliver promises to men, but very often threatenings, to warn them of the judgments of God. Lastly, The command of God to the prophet to acquaint the *Jews* with all

that he should command him, promising to support him against all that should oppose him, shows, that the ministers of the Lord are bound to discharge their office without fearing men, and courageously to declare the whole will of God; and that God always supports them that faithfully discharge the duties of their calling.

CHAPTER II.

THERE are three things to be considered in this chapter: I. God, under the similitude of a husband who has a tender affection for his wife, represents his own love to the *Jews*, and the many good things he had done for them in the land of *Canaan*. II. He complains of the ungrateful returns which the *Jews* had made to so much love, and for so many favours; that the people, and even the priests, the kings and the rulers, had carried their rebellions so far, as to forsake the Lord to serve false gods, which the prophet reproaches them for very largely. III. God tells them, that this their ingratitude and idolatry, would be the cause of their destruction, and that he would punish them, by delivering them into the hands of their enemies; that neither *Noph*, nor *Tahapanes*, that is, the *Egyptians* nor the *Assyrians*, in whom they trusted, should deliver them; and that God would make use of these very nations to chastise them.

Reflections.

THIS chapter engages us to reflect upon the love of God towards the *Jews*, upon their ingratitude, and their destruction. I. Upon the first of these we should reflect, that if God thus loved the *Jews*, and did such great things for them, he has manifested to us still greater love, and bestowed much more valuable blessings upon us, than those which he vouchsafed to his ancient people. II. God reproaches the *Jews* with falling into the basest ingratitude against him, and forsaking his worship, to commit the most abominable idolatries. This is expressed

in the following complaint which God makes: *What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? Neither have they said, Where is the Lord that hath brought us up out of the land of Egypt? Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, for my people have forsaken me, who am the fountain of living waters, to hew them out broken cisterns that can hold no water.* By this God very plainly shows, that he is man's sovereign good; that he ceaseth not to draw men to him by his kindness; that it is extreme ingratitude and folly thus to turn away from God, who is the fountain of all their happiness, and cleave to vain things which cannot make them happy; that those who behave thus have no excuse to plead, and are of necessity miserable, as the *Jews* experienced. III. We see that the *Jews*, for their unfaithfulness to God, were deprived of his protection, and drew upon themselves all those miseries which *Jeremiah* threatened them with. Thus all those who forsake God, who abuse his long-suffering, and are insensible both of his mercies and judgments, perish at last in a miserable manner.

CHAPTER III.

I. *Jeremiah* here represents, under the similitude of a woman that had committed adultery, the crime of the *Jews* in forsaking the service of God, and breaking his covenant; and continuing the same comparison, he speaks of *Israel* and *Judah*, as of two sisters that had both fallen into the sin of adultery: the meaning of which is, that the *Israelites* of the ten tribes had first forsaken God to serve idols; and that those of the kingdom of *Judah* had imitated, and even exceeded them by their sins and obstinacy. II. God declares, that notwithstanding the unfaithfulness of that people, he was nevertheless still ready to forgive them upon their conversion. III. He promises, that after he had dispersed the people of *Israel*

and *Judah*, he would one day gather them together, and that then they should serve him faithfully.

Reflections.

I. The comparison that *Jeremiah* makes of the idolatrous *Jews* with an adulaterous woman, represents the sin and perfidiousness of Christians, who do not observe towards God the fidelity they owe him, who break the covenant they have made with him, and return his loving-kindness with nothing but ingratitude and rebellion. We here see that the *Jews* of *Jerusalem*, and of the kingdom of *Judah*, who ought to have been more firmly attached to the pure worship of God, since they had his service settled among them, and had likewise before their eyes the example of their brethren of the ten tribes, who had lately been destroyed, did notwithstanding imitate and even exceed them in their idolatry. It sometimes happens, that they who have received the greatest favours from God abuse them, and thereby render themselves more guilty than those who have not enjoyed the same privileges. III. God declares, that he was still willing to pardon the *Jews*, notwithstanding their infidelity: *Return*, says he, *ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.* God does not cast off those who have most offended him: he still preserves a favourable inclination towards them; he makes them proffers of mercy, and exhorts them to turn again to him. Lastly, It is to be observed, that the promise which God made to gather together the people of *Israel* and *Judah*, was in some sort accomplished, when the *Jews* returned from the captivity of *Babylon;* but since that deliverance concerned properly only those of *Judah*, and that the greatest part of *Israel* remained still dispersed; these promises extend to the times of the Gospel, when these two people were to be united again in the Christian church; and they will be fully accomplished, when the *Jewish* nation shall be converted.

CHAPTER IV.

I. God assures the *Jews*, that if they would be converted, he would have compassion on them. II. He threatens them, that if they continued in their rebellions, they should be subdued by the *Chaldeans*; and the prophet, by the comparison of a lion seeking his prey, of a strong wind which breaks and roots up all before it, and of a woman in travail, represents how terrible the coming of the *Chaldeans* would be, and the miserable condition to which *Jerusalem*, and all *Judea* would be reduced.

Reflections.

The promises of pardon which God made to the *Jews*, if they would turn to him, teach us how good and gracious the Lord is, and that the door of his mercy is open, even to those who have most offended him, provided they truly turn to him, and repent of their sins. But the severe threatenings that God joins to his promises, show us, that he is righteous as well as merciful, and that they who obstinately persist in their sins, have nothing to hope from him. This we may learn by what befel the *Jews*. The prophet's description in this chapter, of the miseries which were shortly to fall upon *Judea*, and of the desolation that would be occasioned by the *Chaldeans* in that country, is a picture of what happened to that people some years after, and may serve as an instance to convince us of the certainty of the divine threatenings, and the severity of God's judgments.

CHAPTER V.

I. *Jeremiah* complains, that the wickedness of *Jerusalem* was so general, that there could hardly be found one good man in the city; he says, that the *Jews* were insensible under the divine corrections; that the mean and great were equally hardened; and that all had abandoned themselves to idolatry, to adultery, and all sorts of sins. II. He denounces the divine

vengeance against the *Jews* for these sins; and though that people, seduced by false prophets, flattered themselves with peace, he declares that the *Chaldeans* would quickly come against *Jerusalem*, but that nevertheless God would not utterly destroy his people. Lastly, The prophet exhorts the *Jews* to fear Almighty God, and to repent; he reproaches them with their blindness, their injustice, and other crimes; and complains especially, that the priests and the prophets were as corrupt as the people.

Reflections.

THIS chapter contains very important instructions. We see here, I. How we may discover when a nation is extremely corrupt; which is certainly the case when the number of good men in it is very small; when the great men, and the rulers of the people, have forsaken the Lord, as well as the meanest; when impurity and injustice reign without opposition; when men have neither a grateful sense of the kindnesses of the Lord, nor dread his threatenings; and lastly, when the ministers whom God has appointed, instead of opposing the evil, follow the general corruption, countenance and encourage it, which the prophet calls *an amazing and horrible thing*. II. It is to be observed, that when the *Jews* were thus sunk in wickedness, they did not believe the words, nor dread the threatenings of the prophet, but flattered themselves in their wickedness, being persuaded that no harm would happen to them. Such is the blindness of men; they live in security, and dread not the judgments of God, even when they are most threatened. However, God at last executes his threatenings, as these words express, which are more than once repeated by *Jeremiah: Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?* Lastly, The reasons which the *Jews* had to dread the Almighty, so strongly represented in this chapter, and the blindness of that people, ought to be well considered. This teaches us that it is strange stupidity in men not to fear that great God

whose power is unbounded, who is Lord of the universe, and poureth his benefits upon them, sending rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons. By this means they expose themselves to his wrath, and deprive themselves of the effects of his mercy, since, as God says, *The iniquities of men turn away his favours, and withhold good things from them.*

CHAPTER VI.

Jeremiah declares, that God would shortly bring a nation from the north against *Jerusalem*, meaning the *Chaldeans*, who were in a few years to besiege and take that city, and to carry the *Jews* into captivity. God exhorts the *Jews* to repentance, assuring them that he still loved them, but that the true cause of their destruction would be their impenitence, their incurable obstinacy, and the general corruption that reigned among them; their abandoning themselves to sins of every kind: and, above all, the sins of the priests and the prophets, and their contempt of the divine threatenings and remonstrances. III. The Lord declares that the offerings, sacrifices, and all the external worship of the *Jews*, should not screen them from their ruin, and even that those things should rather hasten it, and make it more dreadful.

Reflections.

We must here observe, I. God's goodness and extreme tenderness, in warning men of the miseries that threaten them, and exhorting them to prevent their destruction by repentance. This goodness of the Lord appears in these remarkable words: *Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee.* II. The severe threatenings added to these exhortations, teach us, that how great soever God's patience and loving-kindness is, when it has been long despised it gives place to his wrath. This the *Jews* experienced a short time after these threatenings were denounced against them by *Jeremiah.* III. From this chapter we may collect, that men most provoke God's wrath, when they give up themselves in such a manner to

evil, that they sin without shame or restraint; when they know not how to blush; when they disregard the exhortation of the ministers of the Lord; when God's ministers themselves live loose and disorderly lives, and when the rich and poor are alike corrupt. Lastly, It appears from this chapter, that while the *Jews* were filling up the measure of their iniquities, they still continued to offer to God incense and sacrifice; but that God rejected all the worship they pretended to pay him, and prepared a severe scourge for them. The wicked and ungodly sometimes perform the external duties of religion; but all the worship of men who fear not God, far from procuring his favour, only tends to provoke his wrath the more.

CHAPTER VII.

I. THIS chapter contains a grave and solemn reproof of the *Jews* for their sins, and especially for their hypocrisy and vain confidence, and for profaning the temple and the service of God. *Jeremiah* threatens them, that God would treat *Jerusalem* and the temple as he had treated *Shiloh*, where the tabernacle formerly was, and as he had treated their brethren of *Ephraim*, that is, the *Israelites* of the ten tribes, who had been destroyed by the *Assyrians*. II. God forbids *Jeremiah* to intercede for the *Jews*; he says, it is in vain for them to offer sacrifices, whilst they gave themselves up to all kinds of sins, and worshipped idols, particularly *Moloch* and the queen of heaven, that is to say, the Moon. God declares, that for these sins the carcases of the *Jews* should be without burial, cast into the valley of *Tophet*, which was a place near *Jerusalem* where the idolatrous *Jews* had offered their children to idols, making them pass through the fire. This chapter demands great attention.

Reflections.

THE grave remonstrances which *Jeremiah* addressed to the *Jews*, engage us to make the following reflections: I. That it is in vain for the wicked to glory

in being members of the church, and to pay public worship to God, while they break his laws; that those who think to please God, by coming into his house, and performing acts of divine worship, and are at the same time unrighteous, unclean, impious, and hypocrites, deceive themselves, and turn the house of God into a den of thieves; and that the only means to obtain the favour of God, is to reform ourselves, and to do that which is right. II. Let us consider, that God, provoked with the sins of the *Jews*, threatens to treat them with the utmost severity, to destroy them and their temple, and forsake them, as he had done *Shiloh* in the days of *Samuel* the prophet, and afterwards the kingdom of the ten tribes. Let us grow wise by their example, as well as by the example of those Christian churches, whose candlestick, that is, the light of God's word, has been removed from them because they abused it. III. We learn, by God's forbidding *Jeremiah* to pray for the *Jews*, that when the anger of God is kindled against a people for their incurable obstinacy, the prayers even of the righteous cannot appease it. These words are very remarkable; *Do they provoke me to anger? saith the Lord: Do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces?* All that men do against God, when they offend him, cannot hurt him, but turns to their own confusion and great misery; and therefore it is only to prevent them from destroying themselves, that God is so kind to warn them of their danger. Lastly, We must take notice of the terrible and just vengeance of God upon the crimes and idolatries of the *Jews*, in destroying their city, and in causing their carcases to be exposed in the very place where they had exercised their abominable idolatries. All these considerations ought to produce in our hearts a wholesome dread of the judgments of God, and should effectually move us to fear and serve him with sincerity.

CHAPTER VIII.

THIS chapter has three parts. I. *Jeremiah* foretells, that the *Jews*, and even the chief men among them, should be cast out, and their dead bodies taken out of their graves, and exposed to the sun, and moon, and the stars, which they had worshipped; and that the condition of the rest of the *Jews* should be so deplorable that they would choose death rather than life. II. The prophet shows the cause of all these calamities, which was the extreme hardness of that people, who would not be converted, notwithstanding the warnings God gave them; and particularly, the impiety of the teachers of the law, of the priests and prophets. Lastly, He describes the desolation which the *Babylonians* were quickly to bring upon *Jerusalem* and all *Judea*.

Reflections.

HERE are these four reflections to be made: I. The first is, that *Jeremiah* foretold of the *Jews*, that their bones should be spread before the sun, and before the stars, which they had worshipped; and that such as lived at the time of their destruction, should wish for death rather than life. Herein we observe the dreadful, but just judgments of God upon that people, who had given up themselves to the sin of idolatry. The punishment of sinners bears usually some resemblance to the sins they have committed. II. The next reflection is drawn from that complaint of the prophet: *Shall they fall and not rise? Shall he turn away and not return? Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay they were not ashamed, neither could they blush.* This teaches us, that when men are impenitent, and are no longer ashamed of their evil deeds, it is a sign their obstinacy is desperate, and their punishment at hand. III. God's frequent and earnest complaints of the hypocrisy and infidelity of the priests and of the

prophets, show how much God is offended, and what great evils threaten those who have the care of the church, and neglect the duties of their functions, and disgrace the sanctity of their character by a profane and irregular life. Lastly, Let us consider, that God, who brought so many calamities upon *Judea*, and exposed that country to the most cruel and merciless enemies, may still punish guilty people and churches after the same manner; but, if he does not punish offenders with temporal calamities, they shall not, for that reason, escape the rigour of his justice; for there are other punishments much more dreadful than any which *Jeremiah* in this chapter denounced against the *Jews*.

CHAPTER IX.

I. *Jeremiah* laments the destruction of the *Jews* and their great sins, such as adultery, lying, deceit, cruelty, and the like. II. The prophet says that *Jerusalem*, and all the land of *Judah*, would be reduced to a wilderness, and to a most deplorable condition, because the *Jews* had forsaken the law and the service of God; and he exhorts the inhabitants of the land, to bewail the calamities that were ready to fall upon them. Lastly, He declares to them, that neither wisdom nor strength, nor their boasted privilege of circumcision, should secure them against the evils which threatened them; and that they would be treated as the neighbouring nations.

Reflections.

On this chapter it must be considered, I. That as *Jeremiah* formerly lamented and bewailed the sins of the *Jews*, and their desolation, so all those who fear God, and especially his true ministers, are affected with a bitter grief at the sight of men's sins, and at the calamities which those sins bring upon them. II. We see in this chapter, that the *Jews* had let themselves loose to all manner of iniquity; that dissimulation, fraud, and perfidiousness, reigned among them to such a degree, that no man could be trusted, not even the

nearest relations; that they gave themselves up to adultery and to uncleanness; and that there was scarce any more knowledge or fear of God in *Jerusalem*. When men's corruption is grown to such an height as this, a nation cannot long remain unpunished. This drew upon the *Jews* the utmost effects of God's wrath, as these words declare: *Who is the wise man that may understand this, and who is he to whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth, and is burnt up like a wilderness, that none passeth through? And the Lord said, Because they have forsaken my law, which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein: but have walked after the imagination of their own heart.* III. The conclusion of this chapter teaches us, that we ought not to boast in our own wisdom, or strength, nor even in the outward marks of the divine covenant; but that we ought to glory only in knowing and fearing God, as these words of *Jeremiah* import, which are quoted by St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. i. and 2 Cor. x. *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord.*

CHAPTER X.

In this chapter *Jeremiah* exhorts the *Jews* not to imitate the folly of those that worshipped the stars, and that served idols which they themselves had made. To the vanity of idols he opposes the majesty of the supreme God, who is the Creator and Lord of the universe; and to the stupidity of idolaters, he opposes the happiness of the children of *Israel* in knowing the true God, and being in covenant with him. Next, he foretells that the *Jews* were going to be reduced to extreme misery, for having abandoned themselves to idolatry; nevertheless, he beseeches the Lord not to chastise them in his wrath, nor to destroy them utterly.

Reflections.

THIS chapter treats of the idolatry of the heathens. I. Here we see exposed the madness of those who adored the stars of heaven, and idols of wood, gold, or silver, made by men's hands, and which, being without sense or life, were incapable of doing either good or hurt. All this *Jeremiah* represented to the *Jews*, to inspire them with an abhorrence of idolatry, to convince them of their great guilt in falling into it, and to prevent them from running into it, when they were dispersed among the idolatrous nations. These reflections engage us to praise God for giving us the knowledge of himself; and should keep us, not only from idolatry, but from every thing that has the least tendency towards it, and from all superstitions and vain notions and practices. II. The comparison here made between the impotency and vanity of idols, and the majesty of the Almighty God, who created heaven and earth, and governs it, should inspire us with sentiments of fear and reverence for that great God; and lead us to say with *Jeremiah*, *There is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O king of nations? For to thee doth it appertain.* III. We here see, that the *Jews* were brought to desolation by the *Babylonians*, because they forsook the service of God, and the allegiance they owed him. So severe a punishment proves, that the wrath of God overtakes those, who, after having known God, do not glorify him as God. Lastly, We may gather from the last words of this chapter, that God chastises men because his chastisements are needful for them, but does not do it for their destruction; therefore we ought humbly to submit ourselves to the chastening dispensations of Providence, and use this prayer of the prophet; *O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.*

CHAPTER XI.

I. God sets before the *Jews* the covenant he had made with them when their fathers came out of *Egypt*, and reproaches them for having obstinately broken it by their sins, and especially by idolatry. II. He tells them, that to punish them he would visit them with his rod, and forbids *Jeremiah* to pray for them. III. The prophet complains of the inhabitants of *Anathoth*, which was the city where *Jeremiah* dwelt, because they would have hindered him from speaking to them, and would even have taken away his life.

Reflections.

The first instruction which this chapter affords us is taken from the curse which God denounces against those who keep not his covenant. Let us reflect on this a little, and remember, that God has made a more excellent covenant with us, than with the *Jews;* that this new covenant engages us still more strictly to hear his voice, and to do all that he hath commanded us; wherefore if we break it, we shall incur a much heavier punishment. We ought to consider further, that it is not only by worshipping idols, that the divine covenant is broken; but that this may be done likewise, by breaking the vows which we have made to God, and by withdrawing our hearts from him to give them to the world. God complains in this chapter, that the inhabitants of *Jerusalem* had conspired against him, and were incurably bent upon evil; which so highly provoked God against them, that he forbad *Jeremiah* even to pray for them. This teaches us, that when the wickedness of men is come to its full height, when they agree in nothing else but in provoking the Lord, and when his laws are generally despised, he spares them no longer, and even the prayers of the righteous become useless. Lastly, We should consider well the threatenings denounced in this chapter against the *Jews*, and in particular against the inhabitants of *Anathoth*, who

would have hindered *Jeremiah* from prophesying in the name of the Lord, and would have taken away his life too. It is a very great sin to reject the word of the Lord, to refuse to hear his faithful servants, and even attempt to stop their mouths; and God will call those churches and people, who are guilty of this sin, to a severe account. However, the ministers of the Lord, in imitation of *Jeremiah*, ought neither to be provoked nor discouraged, when they meet with the like opposition.

CHAPTER XII.

I. *Jeremiah* asks of God, why the wicked *Jews*, who reject his ministry, still enjoyed prosperity. The Lord answers, that he must prepare to meet with still greater opposition at *Jerusalem;* but that he should see the accomplishment of his threatenings; and that this people should soon be forsaken, and carried captive into a strange country: from whence, however, he would bring them back again. II. God declares, that he would likewise punish the neighbouring nations, because of the evils they had done his people; but if these nations embrace the worship of the true God, they also should be esteemed his people.

Reflections.

WHAT we are to consider upon this chapter is, I. Never to believe that the wicked and the hypocrites shall escape unpunished, or that they are truly happy because God spares them for a while; nor that the threatenings of God are less sure, because he defers the execution of them. II. That the servants of God ought not to be discouraged, though they should be exposed to the gainsaying and the scoffs of the wicked; nay, that those who are resolved to discharge their duty with integrity, have reason to expect it. III. That the threatenings of the Lord have, soon or late, their effect; and that neither the covenant of God, nor the love he has shown to any nation, can secure it from his anger, when he has

been provoked to it by repeated instances of rebellion; as we are taught by these remarkable expressions: *I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage, I have given the dearly-beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies.* IV. God revealed his purpose, first to chastise his own people, and afterwards the neighbouring nations, and even to receive those idolatrous nations into covenant with him. By this we may see that God is just and merciful; that he has no respect of persons, and regards only integrity and uprightness. This appears evidently in the calling of the Gentiles, after the coming of our Lord *Jesus Christ.*

CHAPTER XIII.

I. THE prophet represents to the *Jews* by the figure of a rotten girdle, which was good for nothing, that the covenant they had made with God was going to be broken, and that he would reject them, because they had forsaken him. II. He exhorts all the people, and particularly the king, and the great men, to humble themselves before this destruction came upon them. III. He laments their destruction, and declares, that their invincible obstinacy would bring it upon them.

Reflections.

THE instructions which this chapter affords us, are these: I. That our covenant with God procures us very great advantages, and unites us to him, in the strictest manner; but if we break it, as the *Jews* did, it will become unprofitable to us. II. That when God causes us to hear his threatenings, we should humble ourselves; and as the great are commonly the chief authors of the corruption of the people, and of the miseries consequent to it, it is but reasonable they should, by their humiliation, endeavour to avert the wrath of God. This is the reflection which we should make on the exhortation which *Jeremiah* addresses, not only to the people, but to the king and queen, to give glory to God, and to humble themselves

before the darkness came upon them. III. The tears which *Jeremiah* shed on account of the obstinacy of the *Jews*, and the miseries that were to come upon them, show, that when men's obstinacy is past remedy, good men, and particularly the ministers of God, can do nothing more than sigh and bewail the wretched condition of those that perish. IV. These words, *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil;* deserve to be well considered, as they describe the strange perverseness of the *Jews*, and teach us, that by resisting the grace of God, and by an habitual course of sin, men arrive at that degree of corruption, that it is hard to recover them from it, and many never do recover.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE prophecy contained in this chapter was occasioned by a great drought which God had afflicted *Judea* with, and which *Jeremiah* here describes. To appease the wrath of God in that time of trouble, and to obtain rain, the prophet intercedes for the people: but God tells him, that his prayers were in vain, as well as the prayers and fastings of the *Jews;* that they would shortly be extirpated by all sorts of plagues; and that those false prophets, who had promised them peace, should be confounded, and involved in the general ruin. Nevertheless *Jeremiah* beseeches God to pardon the *Jews*, and not to cast them off entirely in this extremity.

Reflections.

FROM this chapter we are to learn these four things: I. That, as God sent a drought and famine upon *Judea*, to signify to the *Jews* that they had provoked him, and that he should quickly come to destroy them, so we ought to consider all temporal calamities as tokens of the wrath of God, and incitements to repentance. II. That it is the duty of those who are set over the church and of all its true members, to labour by their prayers

as *Jeremiah* did, to prevent and avert the judgments of God; or at least to moderate them, if they cannot be wholly averted. III. That neither the zeal and intercession of the righteous, nor the prayers and fastings of an obstinate and impenitent people, can prevent the Divine vengeance. This the Lord humbly teaches us, when he tells the prophet: *Pray not for this people for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry.* And when he declares that the *Jews* should be consumed, not only by drought and famine, but likewise by war and pestilence. Lastly, The ministers of the Lord ought seriously to reflect upon what is here said of the crime and punishment of those false prophets, who promised peace to the *Jews*, at the very time their ruin was approaching; that it may be a warning to them never to flatter sinners, nor lull them in security; but to speak always with zeal and sincerity, what God has commanded them. We ought likewise to learn from hence, to hearken to those that declare the truth to us sincerely and without flattery.

CHAPTER XV.

God again declares to *Jeremiah*, who had interceded for the *Jews*, that his prayers should not be heard; that their ruin was determined, because they had entirely forsaken the Lord; and that they were to be delivered into the hands of their enemies, who would destroy them; to the wild beasts, and fowls of the air, who would devour them; and to all kinds of miseries. The prophet complains of the ill-treatment he met with from the *Jews*, because of his threatening them with the judgments of God; but the Lord comforts him and assures him of his protection.

Reflections.

From this chapter we may gather these three instructions. I. That although the godly are acceptable to God, and their prayers have great power with him, yet they cannot prevail in favour of those whose hardness is desperate. This God declares after the

strongest manner, when he tells *Jeremiah*, that though *Moses* and *Samuel*, who had formerly turned away the wrath of God from the people of *Israel* by their intercession, should pray to him for the *Jews*, he would not regard them. II. The next instruction is, that the punishment of sinners, be it never so severe, is so just, that they do not deserve to be lamented; as God shows in these words, *Who shall have pity on thee, O Jerusalem? or who shall bemoan thee? or who shall go aside to ask how thou dost? because thou hast forsaken me.* III. The ministers of *Jesus Christ* see, by the example of *Jeremiah*, that they are often called to tell men harsh and disagreeable things, which may expose them to the hatred of the wicked, but that nevertheless they are bound to obey the commands which God gives them, and to keep themselves pure and undefiled in the midst of the general corruption; by which means they may be assured, that God will take them under his protection; and that they shall never fail of his assistance.

CHAPTER XVI.

I. God, to convince the *Jews*, and *Jeremiah* too, that the utmost calamities were coming upon *Judea*, forbids him to marry, or to go into any house of mourning to comfort the afflicted, or be present at any feast. II. He tells him next, that the crimes of the *Jews*, and their prodigious hardness of heart, would be the cause of all their miseries; but he promises nevertheless to bring them again from the north country, that is, from *Babylon*, after they had suffered the punishment of their sins.

Reflections.

I. God forbad *Jeremiah* to marry, to enter into the houses of mourning, or to go to any feast, that by this behaviour of the prophet he might affect the *Jews* the more, and make them understand that the time of their desolation drew near; that the children which should be born should be exposed to all kinds of calamities, and come to a fatal end; that the dead should

be unburied and unlamented; and that this people should soon have no room to rejoice. Here we should take notice, that in a time of calamity God would have us humble ourselves, and even abstain from things which we might lawfully do at another time. II. God positively declares in this chapter, that all these evils will befal the *Jews*, because they had forsaken him, and had done even worse than their fathers; that he took notice of all their ways; and that he would recompense their sins double. This plainly shows that God is just; that he sees and knows all the actions of men; and that when they heighten their sins, they force him, as it were, to take vengeance. III. We see, however, in this chapter, that God still preserved sentiments of love towards the *Jews*, since he was pleased to put an end to the captivity, and bring them again from *Babylon*, after he had chastised them for their iniquity, and brought them into the right way. Thus God deals with men; if he sends afflictions to punish them, he does not wholly reject them, and always pardons those who make a right use of his corrections.

CHAPTER XVII.

I. *Jeremiah* declares to the *Jews*, that their sins, and particularly their idolatry, would speedily occasion their ruin; that the trust which they put in men could not secure them; and that, in order to be happy, they must rely upon God alone, who searches and knows the heart, who is the Judge of all men, and hateth iniquity. II. The prophet complains of the injuries they did him, protests that he had not desired the destruction of the *Jews*, and had only told them what God had commanded him to declare. III. He exhorts the king and the people to repentance, and in particular to prevent the profaning of the Sabbath-day, promising them, that God would bless them if they did; and threatening them with utter destruction if they continued in their sins.

Reflections.

THE reflections to be made on this chapter are, I. That as the *Jews* were given up to their enemies, because they had provoked the Lord, so God will, sooner or later, punish those who offend him. II. That it is in vain to think of being secure in man's assistance, when we have God for our friend; and in general, that those who confide in men, and in the arm of flesh, are accursed of God; but that he blesses all those that trust in him; and that there is no condition more happy and secure than the condition of that man who trusts in God and fears him. III. We should carefully attend to these words of the prophet: *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it? I the Lord search their heart, I try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways.* This should teach us to distrust ourselves, to study to know our own hearts, and to fear God, whose knowledge is infinite, and who is the Judge of all men. IV. This chapter teaches us, that those who acquire riches unjustly, do not long enjoy them. Lastly, Persons of a public character have here several very important lessons. The ministers of the Lord should learn, by the example of *Jeremiah*, not to think it strange if the wicked reject their ministry; to be faithful in the discharge of it, and always to abound with love and charity for those to whom they are sent, though they meet with an unkind reception. And the earnest exhortations addressed by the prophet to kings and rulers, concerning the observation of the Sabbath, show, that it is the duty of princes and magistrates, to perform what God commands, to reverence the divine service, and to prevent its being profaned. This is the way to obtain the Divine favour, as on the contrary, irreligion and impiety deprive kingdoms and states of his protection.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I. *Jeremiah* represents to the *Jews*, by the compa-

rison of a potter and the clay, that God might destroy them, because of their sins; and establish them again, if they were converted. II. He exhorts them to repentance, and threatens them, that if they continued to forget God, they should be desolate. Lastly, He again complains of the conspiracies which the *Jews* had formed to take away his life; and he denounces the vengeance of the Lord against them.

Reflections.

THE comparison of a potter, which is proposed in this chapter, does not signify that God has created men to destroy them, or render them unhappy, by the mere effect of his will; but the design of it was, to teach the *Jews* that they were in the hands of God, and that he was able to punish them, and afterwards to restore them; in the same manner as a potter, who, thinking to make a good vessel, and not succeeding, might break it, and make another with the same clay. Thus God himself explains it, when he says, that if a nation which he had purposed to destroy, turned from its iniquity, he would not destroy it; and, on the contrary, if a nation which he had determined to bless, did not hearken to his voice, he would withdraw his favour from that nation. He declares, moreover, that though he had threatened to destroy the *Jews*, he was still ready to pardon them, and that he would not put his threatening in execution unless they obstinately persisted in their impatience and hardness of heart. From this doctrine, which is of great importance, it appears, that God never wants either power or goodness to do good to men; that he is perfectly just; and that no evil befals them but what they bring upon themselves. We see in the impious proceeding of the *Jews*, who contrived to kill *Jeremiah*, that the servants of God, by discharging their duty, sometimes incur the hatred of the wicked. As for the last verses of this chapter, where *Jeremiah* seems to make imprecations against the *Jews*, they must not be understood as if he had desired their ruin: it appears from this whole Book,

and even from this place, that he had prayed for them; and he calls God to witness, in the foregoing chapter, that he did not wish for their calamity; but these are threatenings which he denounces from God, in quality of prophet, to show, that their destruction was inevitable, and that evils of every kind were to fall upon them and their children.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE design of this chapter is, to make the *Jews* understand, that God for the punishment of their idolatry, and especially for having sacrificed their children to the idol *Moloch*, otherwise called *Baal*, in the valley of *Tophet*, would cause them to perish in so lamentable a manner, that they should eat their children during the siege of *Jerusalem*; and that their carcases should be eaten by the beasts in the same valley. This the prophet represents by breaking an earthen vessel in that place; signifying thereby, that God would destroy them with the same ease, and as suddenly as a man breaks an earthen pot; and that as the pieces of a broken pot cannot be joined together, and are of no use, so likewise their ruin should be total, and most of them should perish without recovery.

Reflections.

I. IT must here be observed in the first place, that the *Jews* had been guilty of the blackest crimes, and of the most execrable idolatry that ever was heard of, since they were come to that pass, as even to burn their own children in honour of their idols. This is a very remarkable proof, that not only those that know not God, but even those who have known him, and profess to worship him, may fall into the greatest wickedness, and renounce all sentiments of religion and nature too, when they have once lost the fear of God, and have given themselves up to blindness and hardness of heart. II. We must consider, that God declared the *Jews* should be killed, and exposed dead

in the same valley, where they had sacrificed their children to idols, and should be reduced by famine, to eat the flesh of their sons and of their daughters. In this event the justice of God is very evident, who frequently punishes men by those very things, wherewith they had offended, and makes those who had been distinguished by his favours, become, upon their abuse of them, examples of the most severe vengeance. The similitude of the earthen pot broken in pieces is very remarkable; well expressing the facility with which God can destroy sinners, and showing, that nothing can deliver or recover them, when he is pleased to punish them.

CHAPTER XX.

A PRIEST named *Pashur*, struck *Jeremiah*, and threw him into prison, for having foretold the destruction of *Jerusalem;* but *Jeremiah* told him that he himself should be carried captive to *Babylon*, with all his family, and all his friends; and that he should die there. The prophet complains of being exposed to the hatred of the wicked *Jews*, and expresses his grief upon that account.

Reflections.

THIS chapter presents us with three principal reflections: I. We see how *Jeremiah* was beaten, and put into prison, for having prophesied against the *Jews;* but that he did not forbear, however, to foretell their destruction; and in particular denounced *Pashur's* doom, declaring that he should feel the effects of the Divine vengeance. Thus the wicked are provoked with, and persecute those who speak to them in the name of God; but the true ministers of the Lord always do what God commands them, and those who set themselves against them receive the just reward of their malice. II. We see here, how *Jeremiah* was astonished and afflicted at the opposition he met with from the *Jews:* but that he strengthened himself, nevertheless, by trusting in

God. All who suffer for righteousness' sake should consider this, that they may not be discouraged when they meet with obstacles. III. The last reflection relates to the last verses of this chapter, in which *Jeremiah* says, *Cursed be the day in which I was born.* It might be observed, that the prophet does not speak of himself here, but represents the sentiments of the *Jews*, what they would say at the time of their destruction, which would be so terrible, that it would be more happy for them if they had never been born, and they themselves would wish for death. But suppose these words should relate to *Jeremiah*, we must not believe that he was guilty of murmuring or impatience; for in the same chapter he appears animated with a joy and confidence which led him to praise God; but only that he meant by these proverbial ways of speaking, in use at that time, to show what a wretched thing it was to live among a people so corrupt, and how much he was grieved to see their obstinacy, and to consider the miseries that would so heavily fall upon them.

CHAPTER XXI.

THAT which is related in this chapter, happened when the *Chaldeans* besieged *Jerusalem*, under the reign of *Zedekiah*. This prince having sent to consult *Jeremiah* what he was to do, the prophet tells him, that as God had resolved to deliver the city to the *Chaldeans*, they must submit to them; that they who did so, would save their lives; but if the king and people refused to surrender, they would be exposed to the greatest desolations of war. He also exhorts the king and the magistrates, to reform themselves, and to do justice to every body.

Reflections.

HERE we are chiefly to consider the advice which *Jeremiah* gave to king *Zedekiah* and the *Jews*, to submit themselves to the *Chaldeans:* declaring that if they did so, and obeyed the voice of God, they should be

spared; but if not, they should perish by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. We see by this, that God had indeed resolved to deliver *Jerusalem* to the *Chaldeans;* but that he had not resolved their destruction; and that it was still in their own power to save their lives. Thus God gave proofs of his goodness, at the same time that he exercised his justice. This too shows very plainly, that the perdition of sinners is not so determined but they may prevent it; God is always inclined to pardon them and spare them, even when he chastises them; and if at last he overwhelms them with his judgments, it is because he is forced to it by their impenitence. This teaches us likewise, that when God will correct us, we must submit to it, lest by our resistance we draw upon ourselves greater evils. Lastly, This chapter teaches judges and magistrates, that the exercise of justice is one of the most effectual means to prevent the judgments of God, and procure his protection.

CHAPTER XXII.

I. *Jeremiah* exhorts the king of *Judah* and the people to repentance, and particularly to the practice of justice: threatening them, if they did not, that *Jerusalem* should be laid waste. II. He foretells what should happen to the posterity of *Josiah*, king of *Judah;* he says, that *Shallum*, otherwise named *Jehoahaz*, should be carried into *Egypt*, and die there; that *Jehoiakim*, his brother and successor, should be deprived of burial; and that *Coniah*, otherwise called *Jeconiah*, should be carried to *Babylon* by the *Chaldeans;* that he should die there, and have no son to reign after him.

Reflections.

We may learn from this chapter, that of the things which have the greatest tendency to secure the favour and protection of God to any people, one is, when judges render justice to every one impartially. If the

kings and princes of *Judah* had discharged their duty in this matter, according to the exhortations of the prophet, they would have been spared; but for having failed therein, they were destroyed, and the whole nation perished with them. There is another passage in this chapter, which deserves to be taken notice of; that place, I mean, where it is said, that those who attempt to raise and establish their families by wicked ways, and by covetousness, shall never prosper. But the principal reflection to be made on what has been read, relates to the kings here spoken of. All that *Jeremiah* had said came unto them. *Shallum*, son of king *Josiah*, was taken by the king of *Egypt*, and carried into that country, where he died; *Jehoiakim* fell into the hands of the *Chaldeans*, was carried in chains to *Babylon*, and so was *Jeconiah*, who had no successor. Thus God fulfilled the predictions of *Jeremiah*, and punished all their wicked and idolatrous princes. Moreover, the impiety of the descendants of the good and pious king *Josiah*, who all of them came to a tragical end, shows, that the piety of parents will not screen their children from the judgments of God, if those children provoke the Lord by their disobedience.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Jeremiah threatens the wicked shepherds, that is, the magistrates, the priests and the prophets, accusing them of being the cause of all the abominable practices which prevailed in the kingdom of *Judah;* and he foretells, that God would raise in the family of *David* a great king, who should be the deliverer of his people. After this he complains, that the priests and prophets of *Judah* were still worse than those of the kingdom of *Israel;* he says, that they abandoned themselves to the utmost excesses, and, besides this, deceived the people, falsely boasting of revelations, and promising them peace; and he denounces the Divine vengeance against them.

Reflections.

HERE let us consider, I. That God's promise, to give his people good shepherds, and to raise in the house of king *David* a righteous prince, was fulfilled, not only when the *Jews* returned from *Babylon*, under the conduct of *Zorobabel*, who was a descendant of *David*, and had *Ezra*, *Joshua*, and *Nehemiah*, and other good men for their governors; but chiefly when God sent *Jesus Christ*, born of that family, to be the great Shepherd and Redeemer of the church. II. The complaints that God here makes against false shepherds, and chiefly against the priests and prophets of *Jerusalem*, are worthy our whole attention. The Lord says, they were worse than those of *Samaria*, who were however idolaters; that the land was filled with adulteries, perjuries, and all manner of wickedness; but that the prophets were the occasion of it: that if they had made known to the *Jews* the will of God, they might have been converted from their sins; but instead of that, they had deceived them, telling them there was nothing to fear. Ministers, who are sent by God, should attend to these words, and faithfully record them in their minds. But it is a great misfortune indeed, when, instead of faithfully declaring the will of the Lord, and turning sinners from the error of their ways, they flatter and soothe them in their crimes, and withal set them a bad example. God declares very expressly, that he is angry with these wicked shepherds, and that they cannot escape his knowledge and vengeance. By this every one may see of what consequence it is, that pastors and rulers should discharge their duty. But since God threatens the people as well as the prophets, it is evident, that if those who seduce others are guilty, those who suffer themselves to be seduced will be justly punished; that we ought therefore to be well instructed in the will of God, and after we have known it, should be afraid to offend God by disobedience; and to this end should always remember, what he himself says in this chapter, *Can*

any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? Do I not fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?

CHAPTER XXIV.

For the right understanding of this chapter, we must know, that some years before *Nebuchadnezzar* king of *Babylon* came to destroy the city and temple of *Jerusalem*, part of the people had already been carried to *Babylon*, with *Jeconiah* king of *Judah*. In that time the prophet *Jeremiah* had the vision which is here related, and in which he saw two baskets of figs, the one good and the other bad; by which God signified to him the difference there would be, between the *Jews* that were carried away with *Jeconiah*, and those that remained at *Jerusalem;* which was, that the first should be preserved, and that God would restore them; whereas the others should be almost all destroyed by war, famine, and pestilence, together with *Zedekiah*, the last king of *Judah;* and that those who should go down to *Egypt*, after the taking of *Jerusalem*, should there come to a most miserable end. Thus it happened eleven years after this prophecy.

Reflections.

We are to consider upon this chapter, I. That when *Jeconiah* and a part of the people were carried away captives to *Babylon*, it should have been a warning to the *Jews* of their approaching destruction. Thus God punishes men by degrees; and before he destroys them quite, warns them by several corrections that their destruction is not far off; and if they prevent not his judgments, they will feel the weight of them. II. It is to be observed next, that the *Jews* who were first carried away to *Babylon* were happily restored; whereas those that stayed at *Jerusalem*, and thought themselves much more happy than their captive countrymen, but were much more wicked and guilty than they, since they made a very ill use of what had happened to their brethren, were almost all destroyed by

the sword, pestilence, and famine, when *Nebuchadnezzar* came the last time against *Jerusalem*. *Zedekiah* their king came to a fatal end, with all the great men of his court; and those among them who went down into *Egypt*, after the taking of *Jerusalem*, felt the heaviest load of the Divine judgments. This example showeth, that those whom God punishes are not always the most guilty, nor the most miserable; and that sinners who enjoy prosperity, and whom God bears longer with, are treated with the greatest severity, when they persist in their impenitence.

CHAPTER XXV.

THIS chapter contains three remarkable things. I. That the *Jews*, for despising the exhortations of the prophets, and above all, those they had received from *Jeremiah*, during the space of twenty-three years, were to be given up to the *Babylonians*. II. That the captivity of *Babylon* should last seventy years. III. That since God did not spare his own people, he would not spare other nations; that the *Egyptians*, the several people of *Arabia*, the *Philistines*, the *Edomites*, the *Moabites*, and the other neighbours of the *Jews*, together with the *Medes* and *Persians*, should be punished; after which the *Babylonians* themselves should be destroyed. This *Jeremiah* represents, by saying, that all the nations should drink of the cup of the wine of the wrath of God; which is a figurative way of speaking used by the prophets, to signify the Divine vengeance.

Reflections.

I. THE first reflection to be made upon this chapter is, that God bears with men with great patience; that he exhorts them a long time to repentance; but that if they abuse his long-suffering, he at last executes his threatenings. Thus God, after he had in vain called the *Jews* to conversion by the ministry of *Jeremiah*, for the space of twenty-three years, brought the king of *Babylon* to destroy them. II. God, to comfort his

people, promised to bring them back from the *Babylonish* captivity at the end of seventy years; and then to punish the *Babylonians* themselves. These seventy years began in the reign of *Jehoiakim*, when a great number of *Jews* were carried to *Babylon*, with part of the sacred vessels of the temple; and they ended at the time when the *Jews* returned into their own country, by the permission of *Cyrus* king of *Persia*. III. It is to be observed, that the *Egyptians*, the *Philistines*, and the other nations here named, were brought under subjection to the king of *Babylon*, as *Jeremiah* had foretold; and that after this, the *Babylonians* were subdued by the *Medes* and *Persians*. God here speaks as the Lord of the world, who disposes of kings and nations as he pleases; and these great events, which *Jeremiah* and the other prophets had so expressly foretold, are incontestable proofs of the divinity of the prophecies, as well as of the truth of God's promises, his protection of his church, and his justice in punishing its oppressors. Here likewise we should consider, that if God spares not his church, other nations, and the wicked in general, shall not escape his vengeance; and that if he made use of wicked kings to punish nations, he at length rendered to those proud and impious princes, who had been the instruments of his vengeance, the punishment that was due to them; which should teach us to adore that Providence which over-rules all things with wisdom, justice, and goodness.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Jeremiah still persisting to foretell the destruction of *Jerusalem* and the temple, the priests lay hold of him, and with the people, require that he should be put to death. But *Jeremiah*, without being discouraged, continued to foretell the same things in the presence of the magistrates and judges, who after they had heard him, sent him away without doing any harm to him; God having made an officer of the king, named *Ahikam*, his instrument in saving the

life of the prophet. At the end of this chapter there is mention of a prophet, named *Urijah*, whom *Jehoiakim* caused to be assassinated, for having foretold the same things as *Jeremiah*.

Reflections.

THIS chapter sets three notable examples before us. The first is, that of the priests and the people of *Jerusalem*, who would have put *Jeremiah* to death, because he foretold the ruin of their city and temple. This unjust and impious proceeding of the *Jews*, shows, that their wickedness was exceeding great; and that the servants of God are sometimes exposed to great dangers from those who cannot bear their remonstrances. The same reflections may be made upon the crime which king *Jehoiakim* committed, in slaying the prophet *Urijah*, who had foretold the same things as *Jeremiah* did. This persecution of the faithful servants of God was one thing which hastened the destruction of the *Jews*. The second example is that of *Jeremiah*, who finding himself threatened with death, told the *Jews* that they might take away his life, but still he persisted in exhorting and threatening them in the name of God. This character of patience, moderation, and meekness, and at the same time of zeal and courage, ought to be imitated by all those who exercise the sacred ministry, when it is their lot to suffer in the discharge of their duty. Lastly, We have the example of several magistrates, and especially of *Ahikam*, one of the chief ministers of state, who took the part of *Jeremiah*, and acknowledged that he spake to them in the name of the Lord; from whence we may infer, that God protected this prophet, and does in his providential care raise up persons, and find out ways for securing his servants, who are unjustly oppressed. Magistrates and great men ought to meditate upon this history, and learn from hence to fear God, and to defend the innocent, and particularly his faithful ministers; herein imita-

ting *Ahikam*, as well as king *Hezekiah*, who is likewise mentioned in this chapter; who, instead of being angry with the prophet *Micah*, humbled himself, and by his humiliation averted the wrath of God.

CHAPTER XXVII.

I. THE kings bordering upon *Judea*, having sent ambassadors to *Zedekiah* king of *Judah*, God orders *Jeremiah* to send bonds and yokes to those kings, to signify, by this mysterious action, that those kings should be so far from delivering *Zedekiah*, as he expected, that they should themselves be brought under the dominion of the king of *Babylon*. The prophet tells them to submit to that king; and shows, that the empire of the *Babylonians* should last till the time of the grandson of *Nebuchadnezzar*, after which it should come to an end. II. He exhorts *Zedekiah*, and the people of *Jerusalem*, to submit themselves to the king of *Babylon*, and not to give credit to the false prophets, who made them believe that the vessels of the temple, which had been carried to *Babylon* with king *Jehoiakim*, should be brought back again to *Jerusalem*. *Jeremiah* declares, that on the contrary, the remainder of the holy vessels should likewise be taken away, when *Nebuchadnezzar* came to destroy the city and temple.

Reflections.

THERE are four observations to be made upon this chapter: I. We observe, that *Jeremiah* sent bonds and yokes to the kings living near *Jerusalem*, to show them that they should be conquered by *Nebuchadnezzar* king of *Babylon*, who is here called the servant of the Lord, because he was to execute the decrees of Providence. This should have taught *Zedekiah* not to expect any assistance from those kings against the *Babylonians*. This action of *Jeremiah*, which the ambassadors of those princes were witnesses of, tended likewise to convince them that the Lord, in whose name *Jeremiah* spake, was the only true God; which they must needs be convinced of, when they fell under the dominion of the *Babylonians*, who conquered

them all, one after the other. II. It is to be observed, that *Jeremiah* foretold, that the monarchy of the *Babylonians* should subsist till the grandson of *Nebuchadnezzar*, which was verified by the event; that monarchy ended in *Belshazzar*, when *Babylon* was taken by the *Medes* and *Persians*. These are very express predictions, which prove and confirm most evidently the Divine authority of *Jeremiah's* prophecies. III. The exhortations of the prophet addressed to *Zedekiah* and the *Jews*, to submit themselves willingly to the king of *Babylon*, teach us, that it is in vain to pretend to resist the will of God; and that when he has made known his will to us, and thinks fit to chastise us, it is best humbly to submit to it. Lastly, We see in this chapter, that God forbad the *Jews* to hearken to the false prophets, who flattered them and promised them peace, and the return of the holy vessels. It is a great sin in those who are set over the church, to dissemble the will of God, and flatter sinners by a base compliance; and the true servants of God are those who declare the truth sincerely and without disguise.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A FALSE prophet, named *Hananiah*, opposes *Jeremiah*, and foretells that *Jerusalem* should not be taken by the *Babylonians;* that within two years, the holy vessels, which had been carried away to *Babylon*, should be brought back to *Jerusalem*, and that *Jeconiah* should return from thence with all the captives. And to confirm his prediction, he breaks a wooden yoke that *Jeremiah* had made by order of God, which represented that the *Jews* should be made subject to the king of *Babylon*, as we read in the foregoing chapter; but *Jeremiah*, when he had told *Hananiah* that the event would show the falseness of his predictions, causes a yoke of iron to be made, instead of the wooden yoke which *Hananiah* had broken, and prophesies that he should die that year, which accordingly came to pass.

Reflections.

THE chief consideration this chapter affords us is, that at the very time the destruction of the *Jews* drew near, there were among them false prophets, who promised them peace, and a return of the sacred vessels of the temple, and of their captive brethren. There have been in all ages false teachers in the church, who have lulled the people in their security; but it is a dangerous thing to hearken to them, and God is very gracious when he sends faithful ministers, who do not flatter their people, nor conceal any thing that they are commanded to speak to men for their good. The courage of *Jeremiah* in resisting *Hananiah*, shows that we should never give way to the wicked when they attempt to seduce others; but should oppose them always, and discharge our duty with boldness. The punishment of *Hananiah*, who died according to the prediction of *Jeremiah*, might have taught the *Jews* that *Hananiah* was a false prophet, and that the rest of *Jeremiah's* threatenings should be fulfilled. This is an example of the Divine vengeance, which pursues those who resist God and his holy word, and who seduce others to sin or error.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN this letter, wrote to the *Jews* who had been carried away to *Babylon* with *Jeconiah*, the prophet *Jeremiah* does four things: I. He exhorts them to stay in *Babylon*, and to be faithful to the king and government of that country, and not to believe the prophets, who promised them that they should be delivered before the seventy years of their captivity were expired. II. He promises, that at the end of that time God would bring them again to *Jerusalem*. III. He tells them that the *Jews*, who were yet at *Jerusalem*, and their king *Zedekiah*, were going to be reduced to the utmost desolation. IV. He foretells the punishment of *Ahab* and *Zedekiah*, two lying prophets, and of

Shemaiah, who had written letters from *Babylon* to *Jerusalem* against the prophet *Jeremiah*.

Reflections.

I. The order that *Jeremiah* gave the *Jews*, who were at *Babylon*, to stay there, and to pray for the prosperity of that city, shows us, that God would have us live in submission to the kings under whose government we are placed, and to pray for the prosperity of their dominions; and that when God thinks fit to chastise us, we ought to acquiesce in it, and to continue in the condition to which he is pleased to reduce us. II. The clear and repeated promises *Jeremiah* made the *Jews*, that they should be sent away free at the end of seventy years, express the love of God towards them, and the divinity of this prophecy. III. It is to be remarked, that though the *Jews* who were at *Jerusalem*, seemed to be in a more happy state than those who were at *Babylon*, yet they were to be most severely scourged by God, for not improving by the misery of their captive brethren, and for continuing to despise the voice of the Lord. Thus God proportions his punishments to the sins of men, and those which he punishes last are usually treated with the greatest severity, because they have longest abused his patience. IV. We find in this chapter, that there were at *Jerusalem* and at *Babylon* false prophets, who railed against *Jeremiah*, and who seduced the people, and were moreover impure and corrupt men. God, for the trial of men, has in all ages permitted that there should be seducers, to oblige us to be upon our guard against such people, according to the exhortation of our Lord, and to distinguish them from the true ministers of God. But we likewise observe, in the punishment that God inflicted upon the false prophets here mentioned, that God condemns all such; since *Ahab* and *Zedekiah* were burnt by the king of *Babylon*, and *Shemaiah*

perished with his family, without seeing the deliverance of the *Jews;* whereas *Jeremiah,* who spake with sincerity, experienced the Divine protection.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE prophet *Jeremiah,* after he had declared to the *Jews* that they should be led captives to *Babylon,* promises here, that God would deliver them from it; that the *Babylonians* should feel his vengeance; and that after he had chastised his people he would display his infinite power for their restoration.

Reflections.

THE reflections to be made on this chapter, relate to the love of God, his power, justice, and faithfulness. The love of God towards this people appears in his promising to deliver them from the yoke of the king of *Babylon,* and to cause them to dwell again in their own land. His power appears in delivering them at a time when there seemed to be no relief for them, and by means they could never have expected. His justice he gave proof of in taking vengeance on the *Babylonians,* who had oppressed the *Jews* with so much severity and injustice. Lastly, We are to take notice, that God is true and faithful in his promises, since all that was foretold in this chapter concerning the recovery of the *Jews* came to pass, when they returned from *Babylon* into their own country, under the conduct of *Zorobabel* and their other leaders. But these promises were completely fulfilled in the person of *Jesus Christ,* who was born of the posterity of *David.* From all which we may conclude, that God, who is always the same, will protect the Christian church; which, if he appears sometimes angry with, his design is to purify it; and that it shall ever subsist in spite of the attempts of those who seek its ruin.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THIS chapter, as well as the foregoing, treats of the *Jews'* restoration. God promises, that after he had chastised them, and they were converted, he would settle them in a happy and glorious condition; and *Ephraim*, that is, the *Israelites* of the ten tribes, should share in this happy revolution. He exhorts them no more to lament their desolation, and gives them strong assurances of his love. Lastly, He promises to make a new covenant with them, which should last always.

Reflections.

UPON this chapter these three things are to be considered: I. That if the prophets were sent to threaten the *Jews*, they were also sent to comfort them by promises; and that the promises which we have just been reading, must needs tend to strengthen their faith during their captivity in *Babylon*. II. That God promised the *Jews* they should return into their own land, after their repentance and conversion; from whence it appears, that as men's sins are the causes of the afflictions God visits them with, so he restores them not to favour till he sees them penitent and humbled. III. The last and chief reflection is, that God here promises to make a new covenant, which should be as firm as the order of the world, and should last as long as heaven and earth remain. St. *Paul*, in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, applies this prophecy to the covenant of the Gospel: and it is evident, that the true meaning of it is not to be found in the restoration of the *Jews*, which was but of short continuance, wherein the *Jews* of the ten tribes, very few of them, had any share; so that this promise suits only the Christian church, with which God has made a covenant that is to last until the end of the world. This prophecy sets before us the privilege we enjoy in living under this covenant, teaches us, at the same time, that God's design in admitting

us into it was to sanctify us, by putting his law into our hearts, and writing it in our inner parts, that we may serve him and obey him all the days of our life.

CHAPTER XXXII.

I. *Jeremiah* being put in prison at *Jerusalem*, when the *Chaldeans* were besieging that city, God commands him to buy a field, and to put the evidence of the purchase in a place where it might be preserved; whereupon *Jeremiah* asking of the Lord, why he ordered him to buy lands, when the city was to be delivered up to the *Chaldeans*, and the people carried into captivity, God acquainted him, that it was done to be an assurance to the *Jews*, that after they had for the punishment of their sins been sent into captivity to *Babylon*, they should return to their own country, and possess it again.

Reflections.

THE command that God gave *Jeremiah*, to buy a field, when the *Babylonians* were besieging *Jerusalem*, and he himself was in prison, is very remarkable. This tended to comfort the prophet, and to confirm what he said to the *Jews* concerning their approaching destruction, and their ruin. With this view God ordered the deed of the purchase to be preserved, as a proof and a monument of the truth of *Jeremiah's* predictions. From hence we learn, that nothing is impossible to God; that he infallibly executes his promises, how improbable soever they may appear, humanly speaking. We again find in this chapter, that the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, though God had greatly blessed them, and bore long with them, corrupted themselves still more and more; that they ceased not to provoke him, which was the reason he gave them up to the power and cruelty of the *Babylonians;* but after he had made the *Jews* suffer the punishment they deserved, he had pity on them. God severely punishes any contempt offered to his goodness, or

ungrateful returns for favours received; but he does not wholly withdraw his love from those that have offended him; and when his corrections have produced their effect, he restores them to his favour, and makes the expressions of his love succeed those of his wrath.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THIS prophecy is a sequel of the foregoing: its contents are, that *Jerusalem* should be taken, its houses destroyed by the *Babylonians*, and its inhabitants put to death; but that afterwards the *Jews* should return from *Babylon*, rebuild the city with glory, and should have divine service performed in the temple as before. God confirms this promise, saying, his covenant with his people should be as firm and immutable as the order of nature.

Reflections.

FROM the promises made by God to the *Jews*, to bring them again to *Jerusalem*, to dwell there, and to heap his blessings upon them, we are led to consider, that God is always merciful, and inclined to do good to men, and that it is in love he afflicts them; we are also hereby led to take notice of the faithfulness of God, and the firmness of his covenant. It must nevertheless be observed, that the promises here made to the two families of *Israel*, that is, to the *Jews* of the kingdom of *Judah*, and those of the ten tribes, were not entirely fulfilled after the captivity of *Babylon*, since the greatest part of the *Israelites* of the ten tribes remained in the countries where they had been dispersed. The same thing is to be remarked on what God so expressly declares, concerning his worship being for ever established at *Jerusalem*, and his covenant with the house of *David* and with the *Jews*, subsisting as long as the world lasted. This can but imperfectly agree with the restoration of the *Jews* after the captivity, since they did not continue long in *Judea*, and were afterwards destroyed by the *Romans*, and the service performed

at *Jerusalem* was quite abolished by the destruction of the temple. These promises, therefore, relate to the times of the Messiah, and describe the kingdom of *Jesus Christ*, the establishment of the Gospel worship among all nations, and the complete conversion of the *Jews*, which will one day be accomplished. We ought, therefore, to bless God that these promises have been fulfilled with respect to us, and that we are included in the new covenant, which God had promised to make with all men in the latter days.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

When *Nebuchadnezzar* was besieging *Jerusalem*, *Jeremiah* informs *Zedekiah*, that the city should be taken and burnt; that he should not, however, be put to death, but be carried to *Babylon*, and die there. *Zedekiah* and the *Jews*, terrified at the threatenings of *Jeremiah*, showed some tokens of repentance, and set the *Jewish* slaves at liberty, as the law of God directed them to do every seven years. But soon after, when the *Chaldeans* had retired, and the rulers thought the danger was over, they reduced again to a state of slavery those that had been released; whereupon *Jeremiah* declared to them, that because of their hypocrisy, and the violation of their vow, God would cause the *Chaldeans* to return, who should burn *Jerusalem*, and put its inhabitants to death, and lay the whole country waste.

Reflections.

The most important reflection to be made on this chapter relates to the behaviour of *Zedekiah* and the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, who, finding themselves besieged, set at liberty the *Jewish* servants, and pretended they would observe the law of God; but as soon as the *Chaldeans* retired, because the king of *Egypt* came out against them, the *Jews* imagining they had nothing more to fear, changed their mind, and made slaves again of their brethren. Thus sinners

pretend to humble themselves, and seem disposed for conversion whilst they are threatened, and the danger is near; but as soon as their fears are over, they return to their sins and break their promises. *Jeremiah's* reproaches and threatenings of the *Jews* for their impious and unjust proceedings, show, that a repentance and a reformation, which is but of short duration, instead of pacifying God, provoked him the more; and that those who violate his covenant, and their own promises, after having vowed to observe them, shall not escape the punishments which their hypocrisy and infidelity deserve. Thus it happened to *Zedekiah* and the inhabitants of *Jerusalem:* That city was taken soon after these things; and *Zedekiah* fell into the hands of *Nebuchadnezzar,* who put him in chains, and carried him to *Babylon,* where he died. This is an instance of the just judgment of God upon sinners, and especially on wicked princes.

CHAPTER XXXV.

For the understanding of this chapter, we must know, that the *Rechabites* were *Jews* descended from *Jonadab,* the son of *Rechab,* who lived in the time of *Jehu,* king of *Israel, 2 Kings* x. 15, and upon account of a vow which their father had obliged them to make, drank no wine, and dwelt in tents. These *Rechabites* having fled to *Jerusalem,* when the *Chaldeans* entered *Judea,* under the reign of *Jehoiakim,* as we are told in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Second Book of *Kings; Jeremiah* offered them wine, and bade them drink it: which they refused to do, alleging their vow, and the prohibition of their father. Whereupon *Jeremiah* took occasion to reproach the *Jews,* for not showing the same respect to the commandments of God, as the *Rechabites* showed to those of their father, and for still persisting in their idolatry. For which reason he denounces destruction to the *Jews,* and promises the *Rechabites* that God would bless them.

Reflections.

THIS history is worthy of our attention. *Jeremiah* presented wine to the *Rechabites*, not with a design to persuade them to break their vows, but with an intent to make use of their example to condemn the *Jews*. When the *Rechabites* had told him it was not lawful for them to drink wine, on account of the vow their father had laid upon them, *Jeremiah* took occasion from thence to expostulate with the *Jews*, and expose their great guilt in breaking the Divine commands, and the vow they had made to observe them; though these laws related not to things of an indifferent nature, as the use of wine, but to the most necessary and indispensable duties. He reproaches them for the continual exhortations to repentance, which God had given them by his prophets, and which they had refused to hearken to, whilst the *Rechabites* religiously observed the vow laid upon them a long time before. The instruction this furnishes us with, is, that those who do not fulfil the vows they have made to God, nor keep his covenant, must expect the punishments which are denounced against those who shall transgress it; and, on the contrary, that those who observe the duties required, shall be blessed of God, as the *Rechabites* were because of their piety.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

I. *Jeremiah* causes his threatenings against the *Jews* to be writ in a book; and as he could not go himself into the temple, he orders *Baruch* to read them before the people upon a day of fasting. II. *Baruch* having read them in the presence of the people, and of the officers of king *Jehoiakim*, that prince caused the writings to be brought to him; and after he had heard part of it read, he cut it in pieces and threw it in the fire, and ordered *Jeremiah* and *Baruch* to be seized: but God commanded *Jeremiah* to write another book, containing the same

things as that which *Jehoiakim* had burnt, and to tell the king, that God would punish him for his impiety; that his judgments should fall upon him and his posterity; and that his body should be deprived of burial.

Reflections.

In this history we are to remark, I. That God, on a solemn fast-day, did, by the hand of *Jeremiah* and *Baruch*, warn the *Jews* of the dangers that threatened them, that they might avert them by their repentance. This was a proof of the divine goodness toward that people, who were very near their ruin. Thus does God warn sinners, and afford to them the last means to escape their destruction. II. We here see the extreme impiety of king *Jehoiakim*, who, instead of humbling himself, upon the hearing of those threatenings, cut the book in which they were contained, and threw it into the fire, without regard to the entreaties of some of his officers, who would have prevented him, and commanded *Jeremiah* and *Baruch* to be cast into prison. This behaviour of *Jehoiakim* is a proof of the greatest impiety, and of the utmost contempt of God and his word. Behold how the wicked, instead of being affected by the warnings they receive from God, grow angry at them, and even quarrel with God, his word, and his servants. III. The order that *Jeremiah* received from God, to write in another book the same things that were contained in that which the king had burnt, and to add thereto particular threatenings against him, should lead us to acknowledge, that it is in vain for the wicked to pretend to stop the mouth of God's servants, or to scoff at his word. What God has determined is always executed; and, sooner or later, impious and profane men will bear the punishment due to them; as it happened to king *Jehoiakim*, who perished miserably, and whose carcase was thrown into the draught-house, as *Jeremiah* had foretold in the twenty-second chapter of this Book.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

KING *Zedekiah* desired *Jeremiah* to intercede with God for him, and for the *Jews*, at the time when the *Chaldeans* made war against them; but the prophet acquainted him, that although the *Chaldeans* had raised the siege of *Jerusalem*, to go and fight with the king of *Egypt*, who was come to his assistance, yet they should return and take the city. After this, *Jeremiah* going out of *Jerusalem*, was stopped and accused of designing to go over to the *Chaldeans*; upon which charge he was very much abused, and thrown into a dungeon; but king *Zedekiah* causing him secretly to be brought before him, the prophet foretold to him again, that he should fall into the hands of the king of *Babylon*, and besought him not to send him back to the dungeon, lest he should die there; whereupon the king ordered that he should be put in the court of the prison, and fed there during the siege of *Jerusalem*.

Reflections.

THERE are four observations to be made upon this chapter: I. That wicked men seem sometimes to have recourse to God in danger, but that they do it not sincerely. This we may see in king *Zedekiah*, who when he was besieged, applied to the prophet for his prayers and counsel; but did not turn from his iniquities, nor follow the advice which the prophet gave him. II. The next consideration relates to what *Jeremiah* declared to the king, telling him not to depend upon the assistance of the *Egyptians*, nor upon the king of *Babylon's* raising the siege of *Jerusalem*; but that the city should be certainly taken by the *Chaldeans*. From whence we may learn, that it is in vain to trust in the help of man, when God is not on our side, and that nothing can hinder the execution of his purposes. III. We see that *Jeremiah* was unjustly accused by the *Jews*, and was even beaten and thrown into a dungeon, and yet did not forbear telling the king, that he should

be subdued by the *Chaldeans*. The ministers of the Lord have been often exposed to persecution and injustice; but the fear of men never stops the mouths of those who are animated with a true zeal. IV. We are here to take notice, that God protected *Jeremiah*, and softened the heart of *Zedekiah* towards him, so that he not only saved him from the dungeon he had been thrown into, but fed him likewise whilst the siege lasted, and the famine prevailed in *Jerusalem*. Thus Providence sets bounds to the malice of the wicked, delivers the righteous, and makes good men meet with comfort and help in the worst of times.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

I. THE chief men of *Jerusalem* caused *Jeremiah* to be put in a dungeon full of mire, because he continued to foretell the taking of *Jerusalem:* but an officer named *Ebed-melech* interceded for him, and took him out of the dungeon. II. *Jeremiah* being secretly brought before the king, still prophecies, that the city should be taken by the *Chaldeans*, and earnestly exhorts *Zedekiah* to surrender himself to them; promising him, that if he did so, he and his household should save their lives, and the city should not be burnt. The king was almost persuaded, but had not courage to follow the advice of the prophet, who was sent back to prison, and remained there till the taking of *Jerusalem*.

Reflections.

THIS chapter affords us several very instructive lessons. I. The first is, that the servants of God are often persecuted and slandered for discharging their duty. This *Jeremiah* experienced, when he was accused, and imprisoned as a traitor to his king and country, because he advised the *Jews* to submit to the *Chaldeans*. II. The deliverance of *Jeremiah*, who, by *Ebed-melech*, was taken out of the dungeon in which he must have perished, is a proof of the care God takes of the righteous when persecuted; and the piety of *Ebed-melech*, who had the courage to intercede for

Jeremiah, shows, that those who fear God, always do what they can in defence of oppressed innocence. We shall see in the following chapter, that the piety of *Ebed-melech* did not go unrewarded. III. The advice *Jeremiah* gave the king, assuring him in the most positive and express manner, that if he surrendered to the *Chaldeans* no harm should happen to him, and *Jerusalem* should not be burnt; but if he did not, he would expose himself and that city to the greatest miseries, clearly proves that the destruction of that prince, and of *Jerusalem*, was not so determined, but he might have prevented it. The Divine threatenings and predictions, and the knowledge God has of futurity, do not deprive men of their liberty, since the evils they are threatened with are brought on them by their own fault. Lastly, Let us, above all, take notice of the behaviour of *Zedekiah*. That prince had a regard for *Jeremiah*, and even wished to follow his advice; he was moved with what the prophet had told him, and almost determined to do as he advised; but his fear of the rulers of the people prevented him. Thus do sinners act: When God speaks to them, they are sometimes affected; there are still some remains of good in them, which press them to their duty; but they are hindered from following the dictates of their consciences, by a false shame, by the respect they have for men, and by other the like motives, by which means they let slip the favourable opportunity, and after long struggling and resistance, they take the worst side and perish. This was the cause of *Zedekiah's* ruin. The Scripture remarks, that he humbled not himself when *Jeremiah* spake unto him in the name of God; and notwithstanding the solicitations of the prophet, and the conviction of his own conscience, resolved not to yield to the *Chaldeans*. The warnings contained in this chapter are the last that God gave him; and as he neglected to improve them, it was afterwards too late to do it, and he drew upon his subjects and himself the utmost miseries, as we find related in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

We have in this chapter, I. An account of the taking of *Jerusalem*, and of king *Zedekiah's* being carried away to *Babylon* with the *Jews*, after that *Nebuchadnezzar* had caused his sons to be slain before him, and put out his eyes. II. We see what happened to *Jeremiah*, and the respect which the *Chaldeans* had for him. Lastly, This chapter informs us, that *Ebed-melech*, who had saved the prophet's life, was himself also saved when *Jerusalem* was taken, as *Jeremiah* had promised him.

Reflections.

There are three reflections to be made on this chapter: I. That the city of *Jerusalem* was taken, plundered, and burnt with the temple; the king's houses, and the houses of the people; and that the *Jews* were carried to *Babylon*, as *Jeremiah* and the other prophets had threatened. So remarkable an event proves that God is righteous; that his threatenings are certain; and that after he has a long while in vain borne with men, he punishes them according to their deserts. II. The next reflection is, that *Zedekiah* was taken; that the king of *Babylon* caused him to be tried as a traitor, and one that had broken the oath of allegiance to him; and that he slew his children before his face, put out his eyes, and carried him in chains to *Babylon*. What befell that prince, who had received so many warnings from God by the prophet *Jeremiah*, shows that they who refuse to hearken to the voice of God, they who are the authors of other men's sins, and of public miseries, and particularly perjured persons, are made at length examples of the wrath of God. III. It is to be observed, that *Jeremiah* was saved at the taking of *Jerusalem;* and that *Ebed-melech*, who had saved the life of *Jeremiah*, was also himself spared, as God had promised him, because he had put his trust in him. These two are instances

of the protection which God vouchsafes to good men in times of calamity. What happened to *Ebed-melech* shows in particular, that those who protect the innocent, and take upon them to defend the servants of God when they are oppressed, receive the reward of their zeal and piety.

CHAPTER XL.

THIS and the following chapters contain the history of what happened to the *Jews*, whom the king of *Babylon* left in *Judea*, after the taking of *Jerusalem*. *Jeremiah* being carried to *Ramah* in chains, with the rest of the captive *Jews*, the captain of the guard to the king of *Babylon* gave *Jeremiah* his choice, either to go to *Babylon* or to stay in the country with the *Jews;* but the prophet preferred staying in *Judea*, and went to *Gedaliah*, whom *Nebuchadnezzar* had appointed governor of that country. *Gedaliah* exhorts the *Jews* to submit themselves to the *Babylonians*, and assures them, they might remain in their land with safety. This governor is warned, that *Ishmael* and the king of the *Ammonites* had entered into a conspiracy against him, but he would not believe it.

Reflections.

THE remarks we are to make on this chapter are, I. That the *Chaldeans* had a particular regard for *Jeremiah* when *Jerusalem* was taken: and that while the *Jews* were in chains, and carried away captives, the prophet was set at liberty. This was a reward of his zeal and integrity, and is a proof of God's care of those that fear him. II. We here see *Jeremiah's* piety and attachment to his own country and nation. He chose rather to stay in *Judea* with the *Jews* who remained there than to go to *Babylon*, where he might have shared in the favour and kindness of *Nebuchadnezzar*. Thus should we always prefer our duty, and the edification of our brethren, before all worldly advantages. III. From the account given in this chapter it appears, that the *Jews* might, if they would, have

lived securely in their own country, under *Gedaliah*, by submitting themselves to the *Chaldeans;* and even that God sent them that year a plentiful harvest. This was a mark of God's goodness towards that people; and shows, that we ought to submit to, and continue in that condition which God is pleased to allot us; and that he is always ready to do good to those who submit to the dispensations of his providence. Lastly, The conduct of *Gedaliah* is worthy of our attention. When notice was given him of the conspiracy which *Ishmael*, a prince of the royal family of *Judah*, had formed against him, he would not believe it, nor suffer them to take away his life. In this he acted like an honest man. Good men do not easily give credit to tale-bearers; and as they act with candour, and are incapable of doing an ill action, they do not judge others capable of it, nor ever make use of treachery, or other unlawful means to secure themselves.

CHAPTER XLI.

Ishmael treacherously kills *Gedaliah*, the governor of *Judea*, and the *Chaldeans* that were with him. The next day he slew threescore and ten *Jews*, who were going to pray and offer their gifts upon the ruins of the temple; and he took prisoners all the *Jews* that were at *Mizpah*, to carry them to the *Ammonites;* but *Johanan* delivered them, and forced *Ishmael* to fly. After which, the *Jews* fearing that the *Chaldeans* would revenge the death of *Gedaliah*, whom *Ishmael* had slain, formed the design of retiring into *Egypt*.

Reflections.

The death of *Gedaliah*, and of the *Jews* who were assassinated by *Ishmael* and the other conspirators, is an instance of base and detestable treachery; which shows, that among the *Jews* who remained in *Judea*, there were some exceeding wicked. However, it appears from what is here said of the fourscore men, who were going to pray at the ruins of the temple, that there

were likewise some pious and zealous persons among the remnant of that nation. What befel them, shows that God permits sometimes the innocent to be oppressed to bring about the wise ends of his providence. However, God did not suffer the traitor *Ishmael*, and his accomplices, to succeed in the design they had formed of making themselves masters of the *Jews*: *Ishmael* did not long enjoy the fruit of his crimes; but God set bounds to his wickedness by the means of *Johanan*, who put *Ishmael* to flight, and delivered the people. If God suffers wicked men, in some measure to succeed in their evil purposes, he likewise puts a stop to them, and does not always suffer them to bring about their unjust schemes.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE *Jews* who remained in *Judea* after the taking of *Jerusalem*, consult with *Jeremiah* about the design they had formed of retiring into *Egypt*, and promise with an oath to do as he should direct them. The prophet orders them to stay in the land, and to submit themselves to the *Chaldeans*, promising them security if they did so, and threatening them, that if they went into *Egypt*, they should there perish miserably, and never see their own country again.

Reflections.

THIS chapter presents us with two reflections: I. That the *Jews* asked counsel of the Lord by *Jeremiah*, whether they should go into *Egypt*, and promised, with an oath, to obey the commandment of the Lord, which, nevertheless, they did not do. Thus men seem sometimes sincerely to desire to know the will of God, and resolved to obey it, and yet follow their own will and break their promises. But to consult God is of no use, if we will not do what he commands us. II. God ordered the *Jews* to stay in *Judea*, and promised them that they should be there in peace; whereas, if they went into *Egypt*, thinking to escape the resent-

ment of the *Chaldeans*, and war and famine, the Divine vengeance would pursue them there, and they should perish by those very scourges which they thought to avoid. This was the effect of the great goodness of God, who was willing to preserve them in their own country, and secure them from the miseries that were coming shortly upon the *Egyptians*. God, in his dealings with men, affords them sufficient means of happiness, and forewarns them of the dangers that threaten them. If we follow his directions, we are always secure; but if we reject them, and prefer the maxims of human prudence before the way which God has revealed, we fall inevitably into misery. Lastly, It is to be observed, that notwithstanding all that *Jeremiah* declared to the *Jews*, they were obstinately bent upon going into *Egypt;* and as the prophet reproached them for it, they deceitfully desired him to consult the Lord for them. Strange infidelity and rebellion! The *Jews* think themselves secure in their own country, when the prophets threaten them with Divine judgments; and think themselves in the utmost danger, when *Jeremiah* assures them they have nothing to fear. Thus men believe neither God's promises nor threatenings; and by that means stop the current of his mercies towards them, and expose themselves to his severest vengeance.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE *Jews* oppose *Jeremiah*, who commanded them, in God's name, to remain in their own country; and they go into *Egypt*, carrying with them *Jeremiah* and *Baruch*. When the prophet was at *Tahpahnes* in *Egypt*, he foretold that *Nebuchadnezzar*, king of *Babylon*, should destroy the *Egyptians*, and their idol temples, and the *Jews* who had retired into that country.

Reflections.

IN the behaviour of the *Jews*, we have an instance of great impiety, joined to the most notorious hypo-

crisy. They had promised with an oath to follow the advice of the prophet; but because his counsel was not agreeable to their inclinations, they went down into *Egypt;* and even accused the prophet of speaking falsely in the name of the Lord, and desiring to deliver them into the hands of the *Chaldeans.* These *Jews* represent those, who upon some occasions express their zeal and good intentions; but forget their promises, and reject the most wholesome counsels, when they thwart their passions, and what they had secretly proposed; till at length they proceed to open rebellion, and cast off all restraint. However, it is remarkable, that God suffered *Jeremiah* to be carried to *Egypt,* that he might there denounce the ruin of the *Egyptians,* as well as of the *Jews,* who had put their trust in them. Wherever the wicked are, the hand of God finds them out; and those who think to avoid, by disobeying him, the evils they dread, and to that end make use of unlawful means, by those very means fall into the evils they thought to shun, and are confounded in their hope.

CHAPTER XLIV.

In this prophecy, which *Jeremiah* pronounced in *Egypt* against the *Jews* that were fled thither, the prophet reproaches them for continuing in their idolatry and rebellion against God, after all the miseries that had befallen them; and declares, that vengeance should pursue them in the country whither they were fled. But the *Jews* haughtily replied, that they were resolved to sacrifice to idols, and to the queen of heaven, that is, the Moon; which made *Jeremiah* inform them, that God would root them all out, except a small number; and the king of *Egypt* should be delivered into the hands of the king of *Babylon.* This chapter deserves a particular attention.

Reflections.

There are several very important reflections to be made upon this chapter: We see, that the *Jews* that were in *Egypt* were not subdued nor humbled by the

desolation of their country, and so obstinately continued in their sins, that they hearkened not to what *Jeremiah* had spoken to them in the name of the Lord. They even proceed to such excess of rage and impiety, as to tell him, that since they had left off sacrificing to idols, they had met with nothing but misfortunes; that this had brought upon them war and famine; and therefore they were resolved to continue to worship false gods. This is an example of desperate wickedness, and most horrid impiety, especially in a people that knew God, and had lately felt the weight of his judgments for falling into idolatry. But when men have once forsaken God, they grow continually worse and worse, and so hardened, that adversity itself cannot tame them; and therefore God, seeing they are incorrigible, forsakes them utterly. Thus it happened to those unhappy *Jews* who retired into *Egypt;* they were destroyed with the *Egyptians*, by war and famine, as *Jeremiah* and the other prophets had foretold; *Nebuchadnezzar* conquered the king of *Egypt:* and the *Jews*, who thought to find a refuge in that king's dominions, perished there in a miserable manner.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE Lord comforts *Baruch*, who lamented for the hardness of the *Jews;* and promises to take care of him, when the city of *Jerusalem* should be taken by the *Chaldeans*. This should be referred to the time preceding the destruction of that city, and to the thirty-sixth chapter of this book.

Reflections.

WHAT is here to be observed is, that the servants of God ought not to abandon themselves to too much sorrow, nor be discouraged, when their ministry is rejected; but always discharge the duties of their calling, in full assurance that God will be their protector.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Jeremiah foretells, that the *Egyptians* should be twice defeated by the *Babylonians;* first at *Carchemish* on the river *Euphrates*, where *Pharaoh Necho* was conquered; and then afterwards in *Egypt* itself, where *Nebuchadnezzar* carried war and desolation, in the time of *Pharaoh Hophrah*. *Jeremiah* also foretells that the *Jews* should return from the captivity. These predictions were made before the destruction of *Jerusalem*.

Reflections.

THE predictions contained in this chapter were exactly accomplished, *Nebuchadnezzar* having twice defeated the *Egyptians;* once near the river *Euphrates*, in the reign of *Jehoiakim*, king of *Judah;* and the next, when he marched into *Egypt*, and subdued it, and carried the inhabitants into captivity, after he had taken the city of *Tyre*, which happened after the taking of *Jerusalem*. By this means God was pleased to punish the *Egyptians*, and at the same time to chastise those *Jews* who took shelter in that country, contrary to the command of God, since a great number of *Jews* perished in that war. However, it must be observed that the prophet foretells, that after this, *Egypt* should be inhabited; and, indeed, the *Egyptians* did return into their own country, as *Ezekiel* expressly declares. Lastly, We here see, that God comforts the *Jews*, promising to restore them, and destroy the nations who had oppressed them. Thus we see that God, amidst all the changes and revolutions that happen in the world, is ever the preserver and protector of his church.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Jeremiah foretells, that the *Babylonians* should subdue the *Philistines, Tyrians, and Zidonians*.

Reflections.

THE *Philistines*, as well as the *Tyrians* and *Zidonians*, were conquered and subdued by *Nebuchadnezzar*; God having determined to punish them for the injuries done to the *Jews*.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Jeremiah denounces the woes that were to fall on the *Moabites*. He foretells that *Nebo*, *Kirjath-haim*, and *Heshbon*, and other cities here mentioned, should be destroyed, and they carried into captivity; but that they should be restored.

Reflections.

THIS chapter contains a very particular detail of the calamities that were to come upon the *Moabites* in all their cities, and throughout their whole country; which is exactly conformable to what the prophet *Isaiah* had foretold before, as we read in the 15th and 16th chapters of his prophecy. All this was fulfilled soon after the taking of *Jerusalem*, when the *Chaldeans* came and ravaged that country. We learn from this chapter, that their idolatry, their insufferable pride, and the insults they had offered to the *Jews*, drew upon them the severe effects of the Divine vengeance.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE prophet denounces the judgments of God against the *Ammonites*, the *Edomites*, the *Syrians*, the *Arabians*, and the *Elamites*.

Reflections.

IN this chapter we see, that when *Jerusalem* was assaulted and taken by the *Chaldeans*, and the *Jews* carried into captivity, God poured out his judgments upon the nations here mentioned. God treated them thus, because they had very much injured his people; and to convince those idolatrous nations, that the God

whom the *Jews* worshipped was the only true God, and the supreme Lord of all things. And that it might be past doubt he was the dispenser of all these events, he was pleased his prophets should foretell them beforehand, and commit their predictions to writing; and the exact completion of these prophecies proves the divine authority of them.

CHAPTER L.

THIS chapter declares that the idols of *Babylon*, whose names were *Bel* and *Merodach*, should be destroyed; and that the *Babylonians* should be destroyed by the *Medes* and *Persians*, after they had oppressed the *Jews*, and other nations mentioned in the foregoing chapters; and that then the *Jews* would be set at liberty, and return into their own country.

Reflections.

THIS prophecy foretells two considerable events; the destruction of the *Babylonians*, and the deliverance of the *Jews*. As to the first of these events, it is to be observed, that after God had chastised the *Jews*, the *Egyptians*, and other nations, whose ruin *Jeremiah* had foretold, by means of the king of *Babylon;* the *Babylonians* themselves were punished in their turn, and fell under the dominion of the *Medes* and *Persians*. God thought fit it should happen, as *Jeremiah* foretold it would, to prove that the gods of the *Babylonians* were but false gods, to confound their pride, and to punish them for their injustice and tyranny, and particularly for reviling the true God, destroying his temple, abolishing his worship, and oppressing his people. The other event taken notice of in this prophecy, is the deliverance of the *Jews*, which happened at the same time; they being set at liberty by *Cyrus* king of *Persia*, after he had taken *Babylon*, and were afterwards protected by the successors of that prince. In the completion of these two predictions of *Jeremiah*, let us acknowledge the

truth and divinity of these prophecies, and at the same time the power of God, his justice and love to his people. Lastly, God revealed these things to *Jeremiah*, and would have the *Jews* informed of them, in order to support and comfort them when they were going to fall into the hands of the *Chaldeans*.

CHAPTER LI.

THE prophet continues to foretell the destruction of *Babylon* and the *Babylonish* empire. He says, that after God has chastised several nations, and especially the *Jews*, by means of the king of *Babylon*, that city should be taken; that the *Babylonish* monarchy should be destroyed; and that then the captive *Jews* should be set at liberty, and return to *Jerusalem* with joy. This prophecy *Jeremiah* gave in writing to *Seraiah*, one of *Zedekiah's* principal officers, who was going to *Babylon* with a message from the king his master; he ordered him to read it as soon as he arrived there, and when he had done reading it, to fasten it to a stone, and throw it into the river *Euphrates:* thereby to express the certainty of the destruction of that city.

Reflections.

THIS very remarkable prophecy, which was fulfilled threescore years after it was first made, is an exact prediction of the taking of *Babylon*, and of the several circumstances attending that memorable event. *Jeremiah* says, that great city would be taken by the *Medes* and *Persians* after a long siege; that though the inhabitants of *Babylon* thought themselves secure in the strength of their city, and the advantage of their situation, since it was surrounded by the waters of the river *Euphrates;* yet the enemies should enter in, after they had turned the course of that river, and dried up the other waters that were about the city. He adds that the king of *Babylon* should not hear the news, till the enemies had entered the city at one end: and that this should come upon him, when he was in the height of joy,

and feasting with the nobles of his kingdom. He says, that the high and lofty walls of that city should be broken down, and no remains be left of its former grandeur. All this perfectly agrees with what *Daniel* and other historians inform us concerning the taking of that great city, and the end of the *Babylonish* empire. When *Jeremiah* and the other prophets foretold these things, the *Babylonians* were at the height of their power and glory; they carried their conquests on every side, and made all submit to their dominion; they were even then upon the very point of destroying the *Jews*, and laying *Jerusalem* waste; and yet the prophet declared that the *Babylonians* themselves should be made desolate, and their city taken, burnt, and utterly overthrown, by princes who should set the *Jews* at liberty, and cause *Jerusalem* to be rebuilt. There is such a character of majesty in all this, as evidently proves the divine original of these prophecies. God thought fit these predictions should be read in *Babylon*, for the consolation of the *Jews* that were already there, and of those that were in a few years to be carried thither; and to teach them that this revolution, so fatal to the *Babylonians*, would be very advantageous to the *Jewish* nation, which would then be set at liberty.

CHAPTER LII.

THIS is an account of the destruction of *Jerusalem*, which, after a long siege, was taken by the king of *Babylon*. The city and temple were burnt; and *Zedekiah* and the princes of *Jerusalem* taken and carried to *Babylon* with the people. The same history we read in the 25th chapter of the Second Book of *Kings*. With this history ends the Book of the Prophet *Jeremiah*.

Reflections.

THIS history offers to our consideration one of the most remarkable events that ever happened, which is the taking of *Jerusalem* by the *Chaldeans*. This city, after it had held out a long siege, and endured a severe famine, was taken by assault, burnt, and utterly

destroyed. The temple itself was involved in this general destruction; and God, who had put his name there, and set that place apart for his worship, permitted the *Babylonians* to profane and burn it, after they had stript it of every thing that was most valuable; so that holy place remained desolate, and the divine service entirely ceased to be performed in it. By which God revenged on the *Jews* the profanation of the temple, and showed likewise, that the service which had been there established was not always to subsist. King *Zedekiah* was put in chains and carried to *Babylon*, having his own eyes put out, after he had seen his sons slain in his presence. This was a judgment of God upon that king, who, by his perjury and rebellion against the king of *Babylon*, and by his obstinacy, had brought all these miseries upon his dominions. The priests and the rulers were also put to death, as the prophet had threatened them, and as they deserved, since, instead of faithfully discharging their duty, they had seduced the people into all manner of wickedness. Lastly, The people were not spared; almost all the *Jews* perished by the famine or by the sword; and of those who escaped the rage of the *Babylonians*, some were carried into captivity, and others remained in *Judea*, in a very low and wretched condition. Thus God accomplished the many threatenings he had denounced against the *Jews* by his prophets, and shewed, that those who persist in offending him, become at length examples of his justice; and that even his covenant does not secure them from his judgments. However, it is worth notice, that the king of *Babylon* treated *Jehoiakim*, king of *Judah*, very kindly, who had been captive for a long time in that city: this was an instance of the goodness of God towards the captive *Jews*, and a preparing the way for their return into their own country, which came to pass, after the seventy years of their captivity were elapsed.

The End of the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah.

THE

LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH.

ARGUMENT.

This book contains the lamentations and complaints which the prophet Jeremiah pronounced upon the desolation of Jerusalem, when that city was taken by the Chaldeans, and together with the temple burnt and destroyed, and the Jews carried away captives to Babylon.

CHAPTER I.

I. THE prophet complains that *Jerusalem*, which was once in so flourishing a condition, was laid waste, the people carried into captivity, and the divine service abolished. II. He confesses, that all these miseries happened to the *Jews* because of their rebellion against God. III. He beseeches him to have compassion on them, and to restrain the malice of their enemies.

Reflections after reading the Chapter.

I. THE destruction of *Jerusalem* affords us a woeful instance of Divine justice. The severity of this justice appears, not only in the city's being taken, and the people exposed to the fury of their enemies, and carried into captivity; but more especially in the burning of the temple, and the suppression of the divine service. After such an example as this, no one can

doubt but God will severely revenge the contempt men offer to his covenant, his worship, and the invitations of his mercy. II. As *Jeremiah* lamented and bewailed this desolation, so all those who love God are most sensibly afflicted, when they see men provoke God by their sins, and his church exposed to sufferings. And as the prophet owns, that all the calamities that befel the *Jews* were the just punishment of their sins; we ought likewise to adore the righteousness of God, in all the evils that happen to us, and receive them as chastisements which we have brought upon ourselves. Lastly, In imitation of *Jeremiah*, we must zealously implore God's mercy when he is provoked against us; and above all, pray fervently for the peace and deliverance of the church.

CHAPTER II.

Jeremiah continues to bewail the desolation of *Jerusalem*, of the temple of *Judea*, and of the whole *Jewish* nation. He gives a most affecting description of their miseries, and implores God's mercy.

Reflections.

THIS chapter engages us to make three reflections: I. The first relates to the miseries that befel the *Jews* in the loss of all their privileges, and of the Divine protection; in the destruction of their city and temple; and in the evils they endured, through war, famine, and captivity. In all these melancholy events, *Jeremiah* acknowledges the just judgment of God on that people, who had abused the favours he had conferred on them with so bountiful a hand. This the prophet had threatened the *Jews* with; and these things *Moses* had foretold would befall them. II. It is to be observed, that though the *Babylonians* had reduced the *Jews* to that deplorable condition they were then in, yet the prophet attributes all these misfortunes to God; and says it was God himself who had cast off his people, and delivered his temple, his altars, and his city, into

the hands of the idolaters. The enemies of the *Jews* could not have hurt them, if God had not withdrawn his protection from the people which he had chosen. God is the dispenser of afflictions to mankind; but in his church, particularly, nothing happens without his will. Lastly, We should consider that when God thus exposes his church to sufferings, he does not design to destroy it, but only to reform and purify it by his corrections. We should pass the same judgment on all the evils that befall men in this life.

CHAPTER III.

In this chapter, which has three parts, I. *Jeremiah* represents, by several figures, the deplorable state of the *Jews*. II. He comforts himself, and acknowledges the love of God in punishing his people, and takes occasion to show, that afflictions are necessary to men; that God, in strict justice, dispenses good and evil; and he exhorts the *Jews* to confess their sins, and be converted. Lastly, He resumes his description of the miserable state of the *Jews*, implores the assistance of God in their behalf, and foretells the destruction of the *Babylonians*, and their other enemies.

Reflections.

This chapter is very proper for the instruction and comfort of persons in affliction. In it we learn, I. That God exposes men to various evils; that he punishes them sometimes with great severity, and reduces them to such a condition, that he seems to have quite forsaken them, and left them without hope of remedy. II. *Jeremiah* teaches us, that God does not willingly afflict them, but does it with justice, and even with mercy; and that when he chastises men, he does not cast them off utterly, but only proposes to bring them back to himself. *Jeremiah* tells us hereupon, that afflictions are very useful and necessary for us; that it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth; that it is by sufferings we learn to seek God; and

that then too it is that God draws nigh to us, since he is always gracious to those who hope in him, and to the soul that seeketh him. III. The prophet teaches us again, that good and evil proceed from the commands of the Most High; and that nothing is done here below but by his will. He instructs us in the duty of persons in affliction, saying, that *man* ought not to complain for the punishment of his sins; but he ought to *search and try his ways*, and *lift up his heart and hands to God*, confessing and forsaking his sins. Lastly, *Jeremiah* assures us, that God is appeased towards those who humble themselves thus under affliction, and improve under his rod. This doctrine should be well understood and remembered, to be used at all times, particularly in the time of adversity.

CHAPTER IV.

In this chapter, which consists of three parts, I. *Jeremiah* describes the terrible judgments of God upon the *Jews*, and compares the happy state they were in before their ruin, with the deplorable condition they were then in. II. He says, that their rebellion, and chiefly the sins of the priests and the prophets, had brought all these miseries upon them. III. He prophesies that God would deliver his people, and denounces the Divine wrath against their enemies, and particularly against the *Edomites*.

Reflections.

We are to consider in this chapter, I. The great change that happened in the condition of the *Jews*, who from a prosperous state were reduced to the greatest misery, being deprived of all the advantages they enjoyed, and overwhelmed with all imaginable evils; for God poured out upon them all the fierceness of his wrath. Thus we see, how those who have been the most favoured of God, feel his severest vengeance when they abuse his mercies. II. *Jeremiah* says, that all these mercies came upon the *Jews*

for their sins, and particularly for the sins of the prophets, and the iniquities of their priests. These remarkable words show, that one thing which most provokes the wrath of God, is the impiety of persons of a public character, and especially of the ministers of religion, because their depravity is commonly followed by the corruption of the people. III. The threatenings here denounced by the prophet against the *Edomites*, were occasioned by their rejoicing at the ruin of the *Jews;* and even contributing towards it. From whence it appears, that if those whom God loves are not spared, the wicked and ungodly have no reason to flatter themselves they shall escape unpunished.

CHAPTER V.

THIS chapter is a prayer, in which *Jeremiah* entreats the Lord to have compassion upon *Jerusalem* and the *Jews;* he represents the greatness of their desolation, confesses that they were justly punished for the sins of their fathers, and earnestly begs of God to restore *Jerusalem* and his people to their former state.

Reflections.

I. THE fervent zeal with which the prophet beseeches the Lord to have compassion on his people, should excite us at all times to pray earnestly for the prosperity of the Church, and the supply of all its wants, whether it be exposed to sufferings, or vice and impiety make cruel havoc in it. II. These words of the prophet should be taken particular notice of; *Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities.* We must not imagine that God, who is just and good, punishes children, so as to exclude them from his mercy, for the sins which their fathers have committed; but it often happens, that God, to chastise the fathers, and for the good of the children themselves, exposes them in this life to the calamities which their fathers, by their sins, have

brought upon them. This the captive *Jews* at *Babylon* experienced; and this God had threatened them with, when he says in the law, that *he would punish the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation;* as we daily see it happens in the course of his providence. Lastly, The humble and earnest prayer which *Jeremiah* made to God to restore the *Jewish* nation, shows, that when God corrects us, and uses us with the greatest severity, we should have recourse to him by a serious repentance, and implore his mercy; which is the only way to procure a renewal of his favours.

The End of the Book of Lamentations.

THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET

EZEKIEL.

ARGUMENT.

Ezekiel prophesied in Chaldea, where he was with the Jews who had been carried thither with king Jehoiakim, about eleven years before the destruction of Jerusalem. He prophesied from the fifth year of the captivity, for the space of about twenty years; while Jeremiah at Jerusalem was foretelling the same things. Ezekiel was sent by God to instruct and exhort the Jews that were in Chaldea, and to foretell the desolation that was to come upon the Jews who were still in Judea, the taking of Jerusalem, the ruin of several nations, the deliverance of the captive Jews, the coming of the Messiah, the calling of the Gentiles, and the establishment of the kingdom of God.

CHAPTER I.

EZEKIEL relates, I. The time and place where God called him. II. A vision which he saw.

Reflections after reading the Chapter.

THERE are two things that here require our attention, namely, the calling of *Ezekiel*, and the vision he received from God. I. The calling of the prophet, and the command he received from God to declare the things contained in this Book, engage us to hearken to it with attention and respect. II. The magnificent vision of the four living creatures, and of the four wheels which *Ezekiel* saw, was a representation of God's glory, which tended to convince the prophet, that God had appeared unto him. It signified, likewise, that God is everywhere present; that his knowledge and power are infinite; that he governs all things by his providence; and as it was by his will *Jerusalem* was destroyed, so he would change its condition, and bring the *Jews* again from their captivity, in a way known only to himself.

CHAPTER II.

I. GOD commands *Ezekiel* to speak to the *Jews*, and to reproach them for their ingratitude. II. He shows him a roll, or a book filled with curses.

Reflections.

THE order *Ezekiel* received from God to speak to the *Jews*, and to tell them boldly and without fear all that he should command him to declare unto them, shows, that those who are sent by God ought to discharge their commission with zeal, without fearing the malice of men; and always to declare the will of the Lord, *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear*. It appears likewise from hence, that those who are warned, are inexcusable if they neglect to improve by it. The vision of that Book, which was filled with lamentations and woes, signified, that the curses which God had denounced against the *Jews* by *Moses* and the prophets, were going to fall heavy upon them; and that they would soon be reduced to the most deplorable condition.

CHAPTER III.

I. God orders *Ezekiel* to eat a roll, or a book: which signified, that he was to hearken to the word of the Lord, and write it in his own heart; that he should execute the command he received, to speak to the *Jews* in *Chaldea*, and not to fear them, though they should be obstinate in their sins: This vision, which the prophet had already seen, was repeated. II. *Ezekiel* goes to the *Jews* that were at *Telabib*, where God instructs him again in the duties of his office, confirms him in his calling by a vision which he had before shown him: and warns him again of the obstinacy and perverseness of the *Jews*.

Reflections.

I. The first thing to be observed on this chapter is, that God tells the prophet, he sent him not to strange nations, but to the *Jews;* and that nevertheless they would not hear him. God is so kind as to prevent men by his grace, and make himself known to them; but they who ought to be most attentive to his voice, and have received the greatest favours from him, are often the most hardened in iniquity II. It is to be considered, that although God knew the obstinacy of the *Jews*, he was pleased nevertheless to send *Ezekiel* to exhort them: by which we see, on one hand, that God warns even those who are most corrupt; and that if they do not make a right use of it, he will punish them with justice; and, on the other hand, that the prospect, or fear of ill success, should not prevent the ministers of the Lord from discharging their duty. III. The promises God made *Ezekiel* to assist him, ought to fill with confidence all those who walk faithfully in the duties of their calling. IV. Let us above all observe, that when God a second time caused *Ezekiel* to behold his glory, he most expressly charged him to warn the *Jews* from him; telling him, that he appointed him as a watchman over them; that if he warned not the wicked, and even the righteous, who

had turned away from their righteousness, they should die in their sins, but that he should be accountable for their loss; whereas if he faithfully warned them, he should deliver his own soul. This shows with what zeal those who watch over the souls of men, and are to give an account, ought to discharge their ministry, and to warn sinners, and even good men, if they would not be responsible before God for their souls, should they perish through their fault. This teaches us likewise, that those who are warned, and do not beware, are without excuse.

CHAPTER IV.

In this chapter we have a figurative and prophetical description of the siege of *Jerusalem*, and of the famine that would be in that city during the siege.

Reflections.

On this chapter let it be remarked, that God formerly represented, by visions and sensible images, what he thought fit to reveal to the prophets; and that they likewise used to represent, by the same images and extraordinary actions, what was to come to pass. The 390 days, in which *Ezekiel* lay on his left side, signified, that *Jerusalem* should be besieged so many days; and these 390 days answered to the 390 years which passed between the time that idolatry was introduced by *Jeroboam*, and the taking of *Jerusalem*. The forty days that the prophet lay on his right side denoted, that from the taking of that city, till the *Chaldeans* had made an end of burning and plundering it, would be so many days; and the like number of years passed after God had declared, in the reign of *Josiah*, that the destruction of that city was irreversibly determined. The mean and uncommon food of the prophet, all that time, signified the great famine that would be in *Jerusalem* during the siege. The Lord was pleased thus to reveal beforehand to *Ezekiel* what was shortly to happen

to the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, that the *Jews*, especially those who were in *Chaldea*, might not doubt of the execution of the threatenings which God had denounced against their countrymen.

CHAPTER V.

GOD commands *Ezekiel* to shave his head and beard, to burn one part of the hair, to cut another part with a sword, to cast another part to the wind, and to shut up the rest. This was another of the mysterious actions of the prophet, which was to signify, that the *Jews* who were at *Jerusalem* should be destroyed, some by pestilence and famine, some by war; that others should be dispersed throughout the world, and that a small number of them should be preserved.

Reflections.

WE have, in this chapter, a very express type of the evils that befell the *Jews*, when the *Chaldeans* besieged and took *Jerusalem*. Great numbers of them perished by the pestilence; many were carried off by famine during the siege; others were slain by the enemies; and those who escaped these misfortunes were dispersed and sent into captivity. II. The prophet, when he proposed this emblem of the *Jews'* destruction, declared that they should be overtaken with these plagues, because they had rejected God's ordinances, and profaned his sanctuary; and especially, because they had imitated, and even exceeded the neighbouring nations in their idolatry. He tells them, that for this reason God would punish them in the sight of those nations; and that as they had exceeded the other nations in wickedness, he would do such things to them as he had never done before, and would execute his judgments upon them with wrath and fury. Thus God punishes men for their rebellion, suiting their punishment to their crimes, and treating those with the greatest severity, who have had the greatest share in his favours, when they ungratefully abuse them.

CHAPTER VI.

In this chapter, which is a continuation of the prophecy in the foregoing, *Ezekiel* prophesies against *Judea*, and foretells, I. That the cities and places where the *Jews* had committed their idolatries should be destroyed, and they should perish by war, famine, and pestilence. II. That there should be a remnant of them preserved and restored, after they had been captives in strange countries.

Reflections.

There are three things to be considered in this chapter: I. That the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, and of all *Judea*, felt those miseries which *Ezekiel* had denounced against them, as we learn from the account of what happened during the siege, and at the taking of that city. God thought fit these things should be foretold beforehand, that, as it is observed in this chapter, the *Jews*, when they came to pass, might confess, that the word of the Lord had not been spoken in vain, and might be encouraged to turn to him. II. Since God thus dealt with the *Jews*, to punish their sins, and especially their idolatry, we may from hence learn, that he particularly abhors idolatry; and that he severely revenges the infidelity of those who know him, and, notwithstanding that, despise his laws, and profane his worship. III. Amidst these threatenings of the prophet, and all these expressions of God's wrath, we see evident tokens of his goodness, promising to spare the remnant of the *Jews*, and to restore those that should remember him and be converted; which is an assurance to us, that those whom God is most provoked with, may still become the objects of his love, if they acknowledge and bewail their sins, and make a right use of his chastisements.

CHAPTER VII.

Ezekiel continues to describe the ruin of the *Jews:* He declares that the end, that is, the time of their desolation was come; that God would spare them no longer; and that he would shortly take vengeance of their idolatry and other sins, causing them to perish by the sword, by pestilence, and by famine; driving them out of their own country, sending them into captivity, and giving their land to strangers.

Reflections.

THESE repeated threatenings of *Ezekiel* against the *Jews* that were still at *Jerusalem*, which were all accomplished, should serve for a warning and example, to teach us, that after God has a long time borne with sinners, he will at last infallibly execute his threatenings. The certainty and severity of God's judgments appear in his express and positive declaration, that he would no longer spare the *Jews*, nor take pity on them. We must not think to rely upon the mercy of God, while we remain in a state of impenitence; since there is a time when the goodness and patience of the Lord are at an end. There is another thing to be taken notice of on this subject, which is, that the prophet here declares, that neither the riches of the *Jews*, nor any other advantages, could save them from the shame and desolation that threatened them; from whence we may gather, that nothing can screen men from the wrath of God when they persist in their sins.

CHAPTER VIII.

GOD carries *Ezekiel* to *Jerusalem* in a vision, and there shows him the many abominations committed by the *Jews*, in worshipping all sorts of idols: and he protests he will pour upon them all his wrath.

Reflections.

THE subject of this chapter is well worthy our attention. We see here, that the *Jews* at *Jerusalem*, a little before their destruction, had given themselves up to the greatest abominations. They worshipped the sun, and the images of all kinds of beasts; their women paid an abominable worship to the idols of the *Egyptians;* and to complete their impiety, they committed this execrable idolatry, not only in their houses, but even in the temple itself. These horrid crimes prove, that they had carried their impieties to the highest pitch, and that no good was to be expected from them. Further, We may observe, that God revealed all these abominations of the *Jews* in a vision to *Ezekiel*, to convince him, and the *Jews* that were with him in *Chaldea*, that the destruction of *Jerusalem* was inevitable and truly just. This shows likewise that God knows all things, that men cannot hide the knowledge of their sins from him, though they should commit them in the dark, and never so secretly, and therefore cannot escape his judgment

CHAPTER IX.

IN this chapter, which is a continuation of the vision mentioned in the foregoing, God, after he had showed *Ezekiel* the abominations and idolatries of the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, commands the ministers of his vengeance to destroy them; but to spare the good men that were still among them, setting a mark on their foreheads. And as the prophet took occasion to ask God, whether he would utterly destroy the *Jews;* he answered, that he would spare them no longer.

Reflections.

THIS chapter engages us to make these three reflections: I. We are carefully to consider the command which God gave to the ministers of his wrath,

to slay and root out old and young, women and children. This the *Chaldeans* executed when they took *Jerusalem;* the inhabitants of that city perished in a miserable manner, by famine, by fire, and sword, the enemies being regardless of every age, sex, or condition. This is a terrible instance of the wrath of God, which ought to inspire us with a dread of his judgments. II. We should seriously reflect upon the order which God gave his angel, to mark and spare all such as grieved and sighed because of the abominations that were committed in *Jerusalem.* These words represent the character of good men, and of God's elect, who afflict themselves at the sight of other men's sins. We may also observe here, how dear to God zealous and pious persons are; what care he takes of them, and how he spares them when he punishes the ungodly. The same promises are made in Holy Scripture to all God's faithful servants, and to those who shall keep themselves undefiled in the midst of the corruptions of the world. Lastly, It is to be well considered, that when *Ezekiel* inquired of God, whether he would destroy his people, God answered, that the sins of the *Jews* were too great not to be avenged; that they had carried their impiety so far as to say, *The Lord hath forsaken the land, and the Lord seeth not;* and therefore that he would have no pity on them. When men have arrived to a certain degree of wickedness; when they have lost all fear of God, and every thing is in the utmost disorder, God is, as it were, obliged to execute justice, and his mercy gives place to his vengeance.

CHAPTER X.

THIS chapter continues the vision related in the two former chapters. *Ezekiel* saw an appearance, like that which he had already seen, which is described in the beginning of this Book; but this last appearance was attended with two particular circumstances: one was, that the prophet saw an angel scattering burning coals over the city of *Jerusalem;* and the other, that

he saw the glory of God depart from the temple and from the city.

Reflections.

God was pleased the vision, which *Ezekiel* had seen at the beginning of his ministry, should be repeated, to confirm his predictions, and to show still more expressly that *Jerusalem* would shortly be burnt and destroyed, and the temple deprived of God's presence and protection. The coals of fire which the angel scattered over the city, signified, that it should be burnt by the *Chaldeans*. It is said, that the angel took these coals from between the cherubims, by the command of God, to show that this destruction proceeded from the Lord. The prophet saw particularly the glory of the Lord go up from the cherubims, and light upon the door of the sanctuary, and from thence upon the door of the court; which showed, that God was going to withdraw himself from that place. This is the general design or meaning of this vision; which is a lively representation of the severe vengeance which God was going very shortly to take of the *Jews*, for the sins committed in *Jerusalem*, and their profaning the temple and the service of God.

CHAPTER XI.

This chapter is a continuation of the former, in which *Ezekiel* finishes his account of the vision he had seen. I. God informs him, that the inhabitants of *Jerusalem* would soon experience his most severe judgments, though they thought they had nothing to fear; of which the sudden death of *Petaliah*, one of the princes of the people, was a sign. II. The prophet declares, that though the *Jews* who were at *Jerusalem* thought they should dwell in their own country, rather than those who were already captives at *Babylon;* yet that these should be recalled, and that God would bless all among them that should truly turn to him. III. After this, the prophet saw the

glory of the Lord, which had rested upon the door of the court of the temple, withdraw entirely from the city; which signified that it would soon be forsaken by God. This vision being ended, the prophet told the vision to the *Jews* in *Chaldea*.

Reflections.

We find by this chapter, that there were at *Jerusalem*, just before the destruction of that city, very many, even among the chief men, who scoffed at the threatenings of the prophet, and gave the people pernicious counsel. This spirit of infidelity and irreligion is always a forerunner of the divine vengeance, especially when those who are in authority are infected. This God testified, when he declared, that he knew all the thoughts of those rebellious and unbelieving *Jews;* and that he would cause the sword to come upon them. From thence we likewise learn, that God knows distinctly all the actions, and all the thoughts of men, and that he judges them all according to their works. The similitude of a caldron, or pot in which flesh is boiled, signified, that part of the inhabitants of *Jerusalem* should perish in that city, and that the rest should be taken from thence, and put to death in the land of *Israel*, and in other places, by their enemies. The promises which God adds to these threatenings, in behalf of the *Jews* that were captives in *Chaldea*, declaring he would bring them again into the land of *Israel*, show, that God is merciful and gracious, even when he is displaying his severest judgments; but they prove at the same time, that he exercises his goodness only towards such sinners as have a new heart and a new spirit, and fear his name; and that to those who follow their own irregular affections, he renders according to their deserts. Lastly, We here see, that the glory of the Lord, which had withdrawn from the sanctuary, afterwards from the temple, and at length forsook the city entirely, implied, that God was going utterly to forsake *Jerusalem* and its inhabitants.

CHAPTER XII.

I. God commands the prophet to go out of his house at the beginning of the night with his face covered; which was to show, that *Zedekiah* the king should fly from *Jerusalem* by night; that he should be taken by the *Chaldeans*, and be carried to *Babylon;* that he should die in that city, but should not see it, because his eyes would be put out. II. The prophet likewise foretells the destruction and captivity of the people of *Jerusalem*. Lastly, He declares, by order of God, that the threatenings of the Lord's prophets were shortly to be put in execution, though the *Jews* imagined they would not be fulfilled of a long time.

Reflections.

I. We meet in this chapter with a very clear representation of all that was shortly to happen to king *Zedekiah* and the *Jews* when *Jerusalem* should be taken by the *Chaldeans;* namely, that that prince should fall into the hand of his enemies; that he should attempt to fly by night from *Jerusalem;* that he should be taken, and have his eyes put out; that he should go to *Babylon*, but not see it; that the princes of *Jerusalem* should be slain; and that the people should be carried into captivity. This prediction, which was literally and in every circumstance fulfilled, proves very clearly, that God has a perfect knowledge of futurity, and that all things are directed by his providence. God gave the *Jews* in *Chaldea* notice of all this, that they might not envy the condition of their brethren who were still in *Jerusalem*. II. It is to be observed, that God here declares, he was resolved to disperse the *Jews* among the nations, that the abominations and the sins with which they had provoked him to wrath might be known among them. This shows that God dispenses his corrections with justice; and that the end which he proposes in chastising men, is to bring them to a confession of their sins, and to repentance, and at the same time to make them serve

for an example to others. III. Another thing this chapter teaches us is, that the *Jews*, though they were extremely guilty, and upon the point of perishing, lived in profound security; that they did not apprehend the threatenings of the prophets, or at least believed it would be a long while before the threatenings would be accomplished; which security of their's made them impatient, and occasioned their utter destruction. It is a dangerous thing to flatter ourselves when God threatens us, and to defer our conversion when he sends us warning of our danger; but a salutary dread, attended with a speedy conversion, is the sure and only way to prevent his judgments.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ezekiel denounces the judgment of God against those prophets and prophetesses who falsely pretended to divine inspiration, and promised peace to the people of *Israel*, at a time when there was no peace for them, and they were going to be destroyed; and he threatens also such as should hearken to these false prophets, with the same miseries.

Reflections.

THE destruction of *Jerusalem* fully verified all that *Ezekiel* had said in this chapter, and the event showed, that those prophets who desired to persuade the people that no harm would happen to them, were impostors, and that *Ezekiel* was really sent to them from God. From hence we are to learn two things: I. That the ministers of the Lord commit a very great sin, and expose themselves to a dreadful condemnation, when instead of boldly reproving impenitent sinners, and threatening them with the anger of God, they soothe them in their crimes, and fill them with a false confidence. The prophet expresses the sin of these false teachers, saying, that they seduced the people, promising them *peace when there was no peace; that they daubed the wall with untempered mortar; and that they sewed pillows to all armholes*

This should be a powerful engagement to all those who are called to the sacred ministry, to discharge the will of God faithfully, lest if they flatter sinners with vain and groundless promises, they expose themselves likewise to the Divine vengeance. II. Since God threatens the people with his judgments for hearkening to false prophets, it is evident that those who suffer themselves to be deceived, shall likewise bear the punishment of their iniquities; especially if they have, as the *Jews* had, means to be instructed in the will of God and their duty. It follows likewise from hence, that as we ought to shun false teachers and seducers, so ought we to love and hearken to those who with zeal and sincerity discharge their duty.

CHAPTER XIV.

I. This chapter contains complaints and threatenings against the hypocritical *Jews*, who made as if they desired to learn the will of God, and to consult his prophets, whilst they worshipped idols, and hearkened to false prophets rather than to the true servants of God. *Ezekiel* tells them, the Lord was going to display his most severe vengeance on the seducers, and them that hearkened to them. II. God declares, that when he should resolve to punish a country by any of his plagues, the good in that country might be preserved, but could not save others; by which God meant to show, that the ruin of the *Jews* was inevitable; that he had resolved to display all his sore judgments at once upon them; and that the small number of good men that remained among them should not secure them.

Reflections.

I. It appears from this chapter, that it is gross impiety and hypocrisy to pretend to inquire of the Lord, and to attend to his word, while our heart is far from him, and we are resolved to persevere in our sins. II. That when God has sufficiently made known his

will to men, and they, notwithstanding, err from the right way, obstinately following their own wills and imaginations, he in his just judgment forsakes them; and then meeting with seducers they give ear to lies rather than the truth. Thus it happened to the *Jews;* instead of following the wholesome counsels God had given them by his prophets, they adhered to impostors, and perished with them when *Jerusalem* was taken, as *Ezekiel* had threatened them. It is a dangerous thing to hearken to any other voice than that of God; who will justly punish both those who seduce others, and those who suffer themselves to be seduced. There are several important instructions to be drawn from the second part of this chapter. We here learn that the sword, famine, pestilence, and other the like calamities, are the punishments which God makes use of against countries and nations. But above all, let us seriously consider what is here said of *Noah*, *Daniel*, and *Job*, those holy men, so acceptable in the sight of God, that if they were among a people whom God had determined to destroy, they could not prevent their destruction. The intercession of good men prevaileth much, but is not always effectual for others; however, God takes care of his own elect, and exempts them from those punishments and miseries to which the wicked and sinners are exposed. It appears from this chapter, that *Daniel* was already become illustrious for his piety, among those who were carried captives to *Babylon* with king *Jehoiakim*. See *Dan.* i. 1—6.

CHAPTER XV.

GOD represents the total destruction of the *Jews*, by the similitude of a vine branch, which is fit for nothing but to be burnt.

Reflections.

WE have here an emblem of the total destruction of the *Jews*, who were to be consumed by the fire of God's wrath; and likewise of the causes of their ruin,

which were the sins and iniquities of that people who were like a barren vine and unprofitable branch. Our Lord makes use of the same similitude to represent what the wicked have reason to expect, when he says, *If any man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.* And *John* the Baptist denounced the same punishment against the unbelievers, in these words; *Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

CHAPTER XVI.

Ezekiel makes use of the parable of an adulterous woman, to show that God had chosen the *Jews*, and had heaped his favours upon them; but they had dealt very treacherously against him, and particularly by their idolatry had broken the covenant he had made with them. He reproaches the *Jews* of *Jerusalem*, for imitating, and even exceeding *Samaria*, that is, the *Israelites* of the ten tribes, in their idolatrous worship; and for defiling themselves with the abominations of the *Egyptians*, *Assyrians*, and *Chaldeans*; he compares them to *Sodom*, which he calls their sister; and he threatens them with a dreadful and inevitable destruction: promising, however, that God would have compassion on part of them, and after he had humbled them, would receive them again into covenant with him.

Reflections.

WHAT we read in this chapter represents the sin of those who have been received into covenant with God, and highly favoured, and notwithstanding this, fall into ingratitude and unbelief, casting off the obedience they owe to him, which the Scripture calls spiritual adultery; to show that men, by acting thus, break the covenant they had made with God. From God's severe reproaches of the *Jews* for not only imitating,

but even surpassing *Samaria* and *Sodom* in their wickedness, we learn that none are more guilty than those who have the greatest share of the divine favours, and have abused them; and that none are more severely punished than they. It is, however, to be remarked, that God declares, that after he had exercised his vengeance upon the rebellious and idolatrous *Jews*, he would remember his covenant, and pardon those who should be converted. The design of temporal judgments is to bring men to repentance, and therefore as soon as they are truly humbled, God is appeased, which is a proof of his goodness, at the same time that he is giving marks of his justice.

CHAPTER XVII.

For the right understanding of this chapter, it must be observed, that when the king of *Babylon* carried *Jeconiah*, the king of *Judah*, into *Chaldea*, with part of the *Jews*, he set *Zedekiah* over those that were left at *Jerusalem*, and made him swear fidelity to him: but *Zedekiah* broke his oath, rebelled against the king of *Babylon*, and made an alliance with the king of *Egypt*, and applied to him for assistance. *Ezekiel* prophesies in this chapter, that God would punish *Zedekiah* for his perjury, and would deliver him up to the *Babylonians*, with all his people. This the prophet represents by the similitude of an eagle and a cedar, which himself explains.

Reflections.

We here see *Zedekiah's* sin, in breaking the oath of fidelity which he had taken to the king of *Babylon*, and applying to the *Egyptians* for assistance; and we see likewise, how *Zedekiah* was punished for his perfidiousness, when God delivered him into the hand of the *Babylonians*, who carried him into captivity. From whence we may learn, that perjury is one of the greatest crimes that can be committed; that this sin brings down the divine vengeance, not only

upon private persons, but upon whole nations; especially when it is committed by them that are set in authority over others. *Ezekiel* declares, that God will recompense the oath that is broken upon the head of him that hath broken it, which *Zedekiah* experienced the truth of. This chapter teaches us, moreover, that God does not bless those means, which perjured and unrighteous men have recourse to; and that it is in vain to fly to men, when we have sinned against God. *Zedekiah* thought to meet with help from the *Egyptians* against the king of *Babylon;* and by this means he engaged this prince to make war against him, and try him as a perjured person. It is added at the end of this chapter, that God would plant a branch of cedar upon the mountain of *Israel,* which should grow and become a great cedar, and the birds of the air should dwell under it. The meaning of which was that *Zorobabel,* a prince of the royal family of *Judah,* should bring the *Jews* from their captivity in *Babylon.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE prophet refutes the murmurings of the captive *Jews,* who complained that God had punished them for the sins of their fathers. Whereupon he declares, I. That God did not impute to the children the sins which their fathers had committed, but that every one should bear the punishment of his own faults. This he explains at large, and sets in the clearest light: to which he adds, to convince the *Jews* of the unreasonableness of their complaints, II. That God desired nothing but their salvation, and that he was ready to pardon them as soon as they sincerely repented; and he exhorts the *Jews* with great warmth, to acknowledge the righteousness of God, and to be converted. There are many important instructions contained in this chapter, which ought to be read with great attention.

Reflections.

THE use we are to make of this chapter is, I. To learn from hence never to murmur against God when he afflicts us, nor to imitate the impiety of the *Jews*, who complained that God punished them for the sins of their fathers, and said, that the ways of God are not equal. II. God says very clearly in this chapter, and repeats it several times expressly, that children shall not bear the iniquity of their fathers, but that the soul which has sinned shall die. To confirm this, God declares that if a good man has a wicked son, the son shall die because of his sins; and if a wicked man has a good son, the son shall live, and the father shall die. This doctrine teaches us, that God is perfectly just as well as good; and that he never condemns men for any but their own sins, though it sometimes happens that the children are involved in the temporal evils, with which God punishes the sins which their fathers have committed. III. God shows, in this chapter, that he is infinitely good, always ready to pardon even those who have committed the greatest crimes; such are idolatry, injustice, and other sins there mentioned; provided they forsake them, and for the future keep his commandments. This assurance is given us in these words: *Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgression, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will you die, O ye house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth: Wherefore turn yourselves and live.* This great mercy of God should strongly excite us to repentance when we have offended him. IV. We here see the absolute necessity of repentance, and learn at the same time, that the repentance to which God joins the promise of pardon, is that kind of repentance which withdraws a man from sin, which leads him, as it is several times repeated in this chapter, to repair the evil he has done by restitution, and by all other possible means. In one word, the Lord

declares there is no repentance effectual but that which produces a new heart, and a change of inclinations, followed by actual amendment and reformation.

CHAPTER XIX.

Ezekiel proposes two emblems: one of a lioness and her whelps, and the other of a vine and its branches; by which the prophet denotes what befel the princes of the royal family of *Judah*, and in particular *Jehoahaz*, who was carried into *Egypt*, and *Jehoiakim*, who was taken, put in chains, and carried to *Babylon*.

Reflections.

In the 36th chapter of the Second Book of *Chronicles*, we find that the latter kings of *Judah* felt the miseries which the prophet here denounces. God who rules all things with wisdom and justice, is in a particular manner the disposer of kings, putting down one, and setting up another, as he pleaseth, and generally making them and their families public examples of his vengeance on those sins they have been guilty of.

CHAPTER XX.

I. The prophet, that he might prevail upon the *Jews* to fear God, and above all, to forsake their idolatry, represents to their elders, who came to consult him, the many favours God had conferred on them, in choosing them and giving them his laws. II. He reproaches them for the continual breach of God's commandments, and serving idols ever since they came out of *Egypt*, both in the wilderness and the land of *Canaan*. III. Because they continued to provoke God, as their fathers had done, the prophet declares, God would pour out all his wrath upon them. He promises, however, that God would have compassion upon some of them, and would bring them again to *Jerusalem*.

Reflections.

THIS chapter presents us with a detail of the favours God had conferred on the *Jews*, in choosing them for his people, and giving them his laws, and bearing so long with them. We here likewise see how ungrateful they were for God's mercies, how insensible of his warnings, his long-suffering, and even of his punishments; for which reason his most severe judgments were shortly to overtake them. This should lead us to consider, that God has done infinitely more for us than for the *Jews;* he has redeemed us by *Jesus Christ;* he has given us the knowledge of his holy laws, by which we may obtain life; and the warnings he gives us, to engage us to serve and fear him, are not less express, nor less frequent, than those addressed to his ancient people. If, after all, we should fall into infidelity and disobedience, we should be infinitely more blameworthy than the *Jews*, and our punishment too would be much more severe. The promises which God makes to gather the *Jews* together again in the land of their forefathers, after they should have acknowledged their sins, and been punished for them, show God's love to his Church, and his design in correcting men; which is to humble and convert them, and make them the objects of his mercy.

CHAPTER XXI.

THIS chapter has two parts; in the first of which *Ezekiel* represents, under the type of a fire consuming wood, and of a drawn sword, the destruction and ruin of *Jerusalem*. In the second he says, that the king of *Babylon* should consult the magicians by lot, to know whether he should make war against the *Ammonites*, or against the *Jews:* and that God would cause the lot to fall in such a manner, that the *Jews* should be destroyed first; and that *Zedekiah* their king, who is here called a profane and wicked prince, should receive the punishment of his perfidiousness, after which the *Ammonites* should be conquered and destroyed.

Reflections.

THE first part of this chapter sets before our eyes, under the similitude of a devouring fire, and of a drawn sword, which spares none, the dismal and unavoidable effects of the divine vengeance, when men provoke God by their sins. In the second part we see how the king of *Babylon* having consulted his idols, cast the lot, to know whether he should go against *Jerusalem* or against the *Ammonites*, though the manner in which the king of *Babylon* chose to determine him what course he should take, was such, yet God was pleased so to direct it, that he turned first against *Jerusalem*. This teaches us very plainly, that God governs all things by his providence; that he even presides over the lot, and over such events as we imagine to depend upon mere chance, and in general over all the actions of men; so that men, without knowing it, execute what he has resolved to do or permit. We are further to consider the ruin of the *Jews*, and especially the exemplary punishment of king *Zedekiah*, as a proof, that sinful nations, and chiefly wicked princes, do at last meet with divine vengeance: and the destruction of the *Ammonites*, who were spared at first, but destroyed by *Nebuchadnezzar*, five years after he had taken *Jerusalem*, shows, that if God forbears chastising the guilty for a time, they shall not escape his judgment.

CHAPTER XXII.

Ezekiel prophesies against *Jerusalem*; he mentions the crimes that were there committed, such as idolatry, contempt of parents, injustice, oppression, murder, profanation of the divine service, adultery, bribes, corruption, and extortion; and says that these crimes would cause the total ruin of *Jerusalem*, and of that whole nation. But he complains, above all, that the prophets, the priests, and the magistrates, abandoned themselves to all kind of iniquity; and that no one

endeavoured to put a stop to the wrath of God, which was ready to fall upon that people.

Reflections.

THERE are two things chiefly to be observed in this chapter: I. An enumeration of the crimes that reigned in *Jerusalem*, a little before it was taken and destroyed by the *Babylonians*. The *Jews* had given themselves up to idolatry, injustice, uncleanness, and to abominations of every kind, and had profaned religion, and the service of God in the most shocking manner. This it was that deprived them of the divine protection, and obliged God to put his threatenings in execution. These sins, no doubt, God does still abhor, and much more in Christians, and will never fail to punish those who do such things. II. The next thing to be observed here is, that God does particularly complain of persons in a public character; that the prophet seduced the people; that the priests broke the law, and profaned holy things; and that the magistrates were addicted to injustice, dishonest gain, fraud, and violence. From these complaints, which God so frequently makes, we may learn, that when the rulers of the Church and the civil magistrates are without religion and virtue, impiety and corruption must needs make great havoc, and we can expect nothing but the utmost misery. Pastors and governors ought seriously to consider this, that they may not be the authors of corruption, and of public calamities, nor occasion the eternal perdition of those that God has set them over.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THIS chapter contains the parable of two sisters that lived in whoredom, who represent the two kingdoms of *Israel;* that is, the kingdom of *Samaria*, or of the ten tribes, which had first forsaken the worship of God and set up idolatry, and the kingdom of *Judah*, which had herein imitated the ten tribes. The

Lord declares, that as those tribes had been given into the hands of the *Assyrians* for their idolatry; so the men of *Judah*, who had been witnesses of the punishment of their brethren, and instead of taking warning by it, had surpassed them in wickedness, should shortly be laid waste by the *Chaldeans*.

Reflections.

THE complaints which God makes in this chapter, both against the *Israelites* of the ten tribes, and the men of *Judah*, leave us no room to doubt but he is particularly offended, when those to whom he has made himself known, corrupt his worship, and rebel against him. What is here said, under the similitude of adultery, shows, that they who are thus unfaithful to God, break his covenant, and expose themselves to the most dreadful effects of his wrath; and since God declares himself much more incensed against the *Jews* of *Jerusalem*, among whom his worship had been preserved, than against those of the ten tribes; we may from hence learn, that rebellion against God, in those who have been distinguished by peculiar privileges, is still more odious than in others.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I. GOD reveals to *Ezekiel*, who was then in *Chaldea*, that upon that very day the king of *Babylon* had laid siege to *Jerusalem*, and orders him to represent the destruction of that city by the type of a caldron, in which flesh was boiled, and afterwards made red-hot. II. That same day *Ezekiel's* wife died, but God forbids him to weep, or to use any tokens of mourning, to show, that the desolation of *Jerusalem* would be so great and general, that husbands and wives, parents and children, and all the nearest relations, could not be able to lament the death of each other.

Reflections.

WHAT we are to consider in this chapter is, I. That although *Ezekiel* was in *Chaldea*, and very far from *Jerusalem*, God made known to him the very day in which the king of *Babylon* had begun the siege of *Jerusalem*; by which it appears, that God perfectly knows all that passes in the world. II. The type of a caldron in which flesh is boiled, and which when empty was put upon the fire again to take away its scum, signified, according to the explanation God gave of that similitude, that the wrath of God was going to be poured upon *Jerusalem*, and upon all its inhabitants, and that his wrath is a consuming fire. III. We must observe, that *Jerusalem* was treated in this manner, because it was defiled and full of abominations; in it blood had been spilt, and its inhabitants committed all manner of wickedness, and remained utterly incorrigible. God proportions men's punishments to their sins, and to the condition they are in, and proceeds to extremities, and makes use of the most severe punishments when their obstinacy is insurmountable. IV. God's forbidding the prophet to weep for the death of his wife, though she was dear to him, was to show the captive *Jews* how dreadful the ruin of their brethren in *Judea* would be, since their dead should not be so much as lamented; and *Ezekiel's* obedience to the command, which must needs be grievous to him, shows that we must sacrifice what is dearest to us when God commands; and that the interest of his glory should more nearly concern us than our own private interest.

CHAPTER XXV.

Ezekiel foretells, that the *Ammonites*, the *Moabites*, *Edomites*, and *Philistines*, who were neighbours and enemies to the *Jews*, should be soon destroyed, because they had rejoiced at the ruin of *Jerusalem*.

Reflections.

THESE three things are to be considered in this chapter: I. That *Ezekiel*, after he had foretold the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and of the *Jews*, denounces the divine vengeance against their enemies. This shows that God is righteous, and if he punishes and corrects his own people, neither will he spare the enemies of his church. II. That the destruction of the *Ammonites*, *Moabites*, *Edomites*, and *Philistines*, happened soon after the taking of *Jerusalem*, those people being subdued by the king of *Babylon*, agreeably to the threatenings denounced against them by *Ezekiel*, *Isaiah*, and *Jeremiah*. III. The next consideration is, that God displayed his judgments against those people, because they had provoked him, and to punish their pride and inhumanity in insulting the *Jews* in the time of their calamity. It is a great sin to rejoice at the miseries of other men, and to be hard and cruel to such as are in affliction; and God severely and justly punishes those who are so; as, on the contrary, he blesses those who are affected with the sufferings of others, and that comfort them.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THIS chapter, and the two following, are a prophecy against the *Tyrians*. In this *Ezekiel* foretells the destruction of the city of *Tyre*. He says, that that city, which had rejoiced to see *Jerusalem* laid waste by king *Nebuchadnezzar*, should be taken, plundered, and destroyed by the same king.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Ezekiel describes the great commerce of the *Tyrians* with other nations, their immense riches, and how astonished every one would be at their destruction.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ezekiel represents the pride of the king of *Tyre;* he says, that *Zidon,* a city bordering upon *Tyre,* should likewise be destroyed; and he promises the *Jews,* that they should return from their captivity, and dwell again in their own land.

Reflections on Chap. xxvi. xxvii. xxviii.

On the twenty-sixth and two following chapters, observe, that though the city of *Tyre* was exceeding powerful, by reason of its situation on the sea-shore, its extensive commerce, its immense riches, and its alliance with almost all the nations of the world, as we read in the twenty-seventh chapter; yet it was very soon to be delivered into the hands of the king of *Babylon,* who would take it, and spoil it of all its glory. In truth, a little after this prophecy, *Nebuchadnezzar* took the city of *Tyre,* after a siege of thirteen years, and destroyed it in such a manner, that it was not rebuilt; for the new city of *Tyre* was not built in the same place where the ancient city stood. One cannot avoid considering this event as the work of God; especially if we reflect, that it had been foretold, with all its circumstances, not only by the prophet *Ezekiel,* eighteen years beforehand; but also by *Isaiah,* above an hundred and twenty years before. Moreover, we are to ascribe this destruction of *Tyre* to the idolatry that prevailed in it, to the pride and luxury which great riches had introduced, and to the hatred which the *Tyrians* bore to the *Jews.* Thus Providence humbles the most powerful states, and the most flourishing cities, to restrain the impiety, pride, injustice, luxury, dissoluteness, and other crimes, which usually attend plenty and prosperity. Lastly, We are to take notice, that when *Ezekiel* denounces the judgments of God against the idolatrous nations, as well as against the *Jews,* he does not promise that they should be restored, as the people of God had reason to hope. This must administer com-

fort to the captive *Jews*, engage them to fly to God by repentance, and convince them that God watched over them, and would not fail to cause them to return from the *Babylonish* captivity.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THIS and the three following chapters are a prophecy against the *Egyptians*. The prophet having foretold the overthrow of *Tyre* in the preceding chapters, in this denounces the destruction of *Egypt*, which should likewise be subdued by the king of *Babylon*, after he had taken *Tyre*. However, *Ezekiel* foretells, that at the end of forty years the *Egyptians* should return into their own country, but should be there in a very abject condition.

CHAPTER XXX.

Ezekiel continues his prophecy against *Egypt*, and says, that the principal cities of that kingdom, which are mentioned by name in this chapter, should be destroyed with their idols.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE prophet represents, by the comparison of a fine large cedar, that the *Assyrian* monarchy had even been more powerful than the *Egyptians*, and yet had come to an end; and that it should be so with the latter.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THIS chapter is a lamentation for the destruction of *Egypt*, which should be reduced to the same condition as the *Persians*, the *Edomites*, and the other nations, who were likewise to be conquered by the *Babylonians*.

Reflections on Chap. xxix. xxx. xxxi. xxxii.

ON these chapters we are to consider, I. That God thought fit to foretell by *Ezekiel*, and by the other prophets, the destruction of *Egypt*, that the *Jews*

might acknowledge that the God whom they worshipped was the supreme Lord of the universe, and of all nations, and that they had in vain put their confidence in the *Egyptians*. II. It is remarkable, that *Ezekiel* says, expressly, that God would deliver *Egypt* to *Nebuchadnezzar*, as a reward for executing his judgments on the city of *Tyre;* that the *Egyptians* should be dispersed; that in forty years they should return to *Egypt;* but that their kingdom should not be restored to them in its former condition, being brought very low. All this was literally fulfilled: *Nebuchadnezzar* became master of *Egypt* after he had taken the city of *Tyre;* the *Egyptians* were carried into captivity; and at the end of some years they returned into their own country, under *Amasis* their king; but the kingdom of *Egypt* did not recover its former splendour, and was afterwards kept low and made subject to foreign princes, as *Ezekiel* had foretold. To compare these prophecies with the event, is very proper, to convince us that God was the author of them, that the holy Scripture is divinely inspired, and that nothing is more certainly true than the doctrines contained in it.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THERE are four things to be considered in this chapter: I. God instructs the prophet in the duties of his office, and the obligation he was under to warn sinners. II. To stop the murmurings of the *Jews*, he declares that he desires not the death of the wicked, and that repenting sinners should be received to mercy; as, on the other hand, the righteous, who forsake the ways of righteousness, shall die in their sin. III. *Ezekiel* receives the news of the taking of *Jerusalem*, and foretells the destruction of those *Jews* that remained in *Judea*. IV. God complains of the hypocrisy of the *Jews* that were at *Babylon*, who came to hear *Ezekiel*, but would not do that which he commanded them in the name of God. This is one of the most instructive chapters in the whole Book.

Reflections.

THAT we may improve by this chapter, we must consider as follows: I. The comparison of a centinel, or watchman, whereby God represents the duties of *Ezekiel's* office, shows with what fidelity the pastors of the church ought to warn sinners, and labour with their utmost strength to recover them from the error of their ways, if they would not be responsible for the ruin of their souls; and it likewise proves, that if sinners do not amend, when they are so warned, their destruction will be just. II. We have here one of the most express declarations of the infinite mercy of God, that is to be found in the whole Scripture. God swears by himself, that he would not by any means the death of the wicked; that he desires nothing but their conversion and life, and receives them graciously as soon as they return to him. The consideration of God's great mercy should fill sinners with confidence, and engage them to repent, and hereby prevent their ruin. III. *Ezekiel* teaches us, that God has no respect in his judgment, but to the good and evil which every man has done; and that as sinners who change their course of life, shall obtain mercy, so likewise the righteous, if they forsake their righteousness, shall die in their sin. What God says in so clear and express a manner on this head, sets his unbounded goodness towards men in a clear light, as well as his unspotted justice; and this doctrine ought to stop the mouths of hardened sinners, and inspire good men with a wholesome fear. IV. We have a remarkable instance of the justice of God, and of the truth of his threatenings, in the taking of *Jerusalem*, and in the calamities that fell upon the *Jews* that still remained in *Judea*. However, it is to be remarked, that those *Jews*, though guilty of all manner of wickedness, and even of idolatry, flattered themselves till then that they should remain in their own land, and continue to possess it. Thus sinners imagine they have nothing to fear, when they are the object of

God's wrath, and his vengeance is going to take hold of them. Lastly, God reproaches the *Jews* for coming to hear the prophet *Ezekiel*, and not doing what he said, which teaches us, that it is downright hypocrisy, and the most criminal contempt, to hear the word of God, and not practise what it prescribes.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THIS chapter contains two things: I. The threatenings against false shepherds; that is to say, against the prophets and magistrates, who, instead of taking care of the flock and sheep of the Lord, are the occasion of their ruin. II. It contains promises, by which God engages to save his sheep, to give them good shepherds; and, above all, to send a great Shepherd, who should redeem his people, and render them eternally happy.

Reflections.

THIS is a chapter, which both magistrates and the rulers of the church ought to meditate upon very seriously. The complaints that God here makes of false shepherds, and the curses he denounces against them, show, that it is the duty of pastors, with their utmost diligence, to watch over the sheep with which they are entrusted, and to provide with care and readiness for all their wants; and that if they fail herein, they must give a severe account to God for it. This too lays an obligation upon princes and magistrates, to govern faithfully and justly the people committed to their trust. What befell the *Jews*, who for the unfaithfulness of their prophets and magistrates were utterly destroyed, shows, that it is the greatest misfortune to a nation to have wicked rulers; and that all who are concerned for the glory of God, and the happiness and edification of the church, have great reason to pray to God, that he would always raise up to his people faithful and good pastors. As to the promises which God makes in this chapter, to save his sheep, and to be himself their shepherd and their guide; they

first denote the return of the *Jews* from their captivity at *Babylon* into their own country; which they did by the authority of *Cyrus*, and under the conduct of their rulers; but they more perfectly agree to *Jesus Christ* our Lord, who is the great Shepherd of the sheep, that good Shepherd, who has laid down his life for them, who came to gather them together in his church, and will give them everlasting life, as he himself has declared in the Gospel.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Ezekiel prophesies against the *Edomites*, and foretells their utter destruction, because of the great mischiefs they had done to the *Jews*, and because they had even proudly opposed God himself.

Reflections.

We here see, that the *Edomites* were to feel the divine vengeance, and that their country was to be laid waste, because they bore a mortal hatred to the people of *Israel*, and had not only rejoiced in their destruction, but had even assisted in bringing it about, and had behaved with great insolence and barbarity. These menaces were not long before they were put in execution against the *Edomites*, their country being plundered and laid waste by the same king that had destroyed *Jerusalem*, and some time after by the *Jews*, in the time of the *Maccabees*. Thus God punishes those who have no pity on the miserable, and take pleasure in doing evil to others; but especially those who persecute the church.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

I. *Ezekiel* foretells the ruin of the *Edomites*, and the other enemies of God's people, and the restoration of the *Jews* to their own land. II. He says, that God had destroyed *Jerusalem*, and scattered the people of *Israel*, because of their sins; but that the Lord would have compassion on them, would again cause

them to inhabit their land, and would heap his favours upon them; and above all, that he would sanctify them, and fill them with the knowledge and fear of his holy name: and that he would do all this for his own glory, and to convince the idolatrous nations that there was no other God but he.

Reflections.

THE reading of this chapter engages us to consider, I. That if God formerly suffered his people to be oppressed by their enemies for awhile, it was not that he designed to cast them off utterly, but because he was willing to purify them by affliction, and at length to manifest his power and justice in delivering them, and in punishing those that had afflicted them. We should pass the same judgment on the persecutions to which the church is exposed, as well as on the afflictions which God dispenses to particular men in this life. II. The promise God here makes of restoring, protecting, and sanctifying his people, is not confined to the deliverance of the *Jews*, and to the temporal blessings vouchsafed them in their land, after their return from *Babylon;* it agrees more especially to the spiritual blessings that God was to bestow first on the *Jews*, and afterwards on all men, in the times of the Messiah, and was accomplished by the coming of *Jesus Christ*, the sending of the Holy Ghost, and by the preaching of the Gospel. III. What we are chiefly to consider in these promises is, that the design of God in granting us these blessings was to withdraw men from sin, to sanctify them, and to give them a new heart and a new spirit, that they might walk in his statutes, and keep his commandments. This then is what we ought chiefly to labour after; this is the end to which we should apply the mercies which God vouchsafes us by the new covenant, which we have the happiness to live under.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THIS chapter consists of two parts. In the first, *Ezekiel* relates the vision he had seen of a field covered with the bones of dead bodies that were brought to life again; by which God was pleased to assure the *Jews*, that he was able to bring them back from the captivity of *Babylon*, though there seemed to be no appearance of their restoration. In the second, the prophet shows, by the emblem of two pieces of wood joined together, that the Lord would reunite the *Jews* of *Ephraim*, that is, of the ten tribes, and those of the kingdom of *Judah*, that they should make but one people, and live under one king; and that God would make an everlasting covenant with them.

Reflections.

I. THIS vision of *Ezekiel*, in which God showed him dead bodies raised to life, tended to instruct the *Jews*, that though they were in a very deplorable condition, and there seemed to be no hopes of their recovery, yet God, by his infinite power, would infallibly deliver them. From whence we may gather, that nothing is impossible with God, and that he never wants means to accomplish his promises. This vision is likewise to be considered as a most express type of the general resurrection. Though our bodies are reduced to dust, God is able to give them life again, and reunite them to our souls; which he will infallibly do at the last day, as we are most clearly taught in the Gospel. *Ezekiel's* prophecy of the two nations of *Israel*, and of *Judah*, being one day gathered together, and united under one king, to serve God with one accord, can be but imperfectly applied to the state of the *Jews* after the captivity: since a considerable part of them, especially those of the ten tribes, never returned into their own country, and those who did return, remained there but a short time, and were almost always under the dominion of

foreign princes. This prophecy therefore must relate to the calling of the *Jews* under the Gospel, their union in the church of Christ, and particularly their conversion, when that people shall embrace the Christian religion.

CHAPTERS XXXVIII. XXXIX.

In these two chapters the prophet foretells, that the church should be assaulted by *Gog:* by which the Holy Spirit is supposed to describe the miseries which the neighbouring kings, and in particular *Antiochus Epiphanes*, king of *Syria*, would bring upon the *Jews*, after their return from *Babylon;* the destruction of that cruel prince, and the glorious deliverance which God would vouchsafe his people by the *Maccabees*.

Reflections on Chapters xxxviii. and xxxix.

As the *Jews* were exposed, some time after their return from the *Babylonish* captivity, to cruel persecutions, particularly under the reign of *Antiochus*, king of *Syria;* God forewarned them of it by this prophecy of *Ezekiel*, and by another of *Daniel*, who likewise foretold the same event; that when these evils came upon them they might not be surprised. In truth, they were attacked and oppressed by *Antiochus*, who made war upon them, put a great number of them to death, profaned the temple at *Jerusalem*, and for some time prevented the performance of divine service. But in their distress they experienced divine assistance; that prince was vanquished, by the divine blessing upon the arms of the *Maccabees;* he became an example of divine vengeance; and the *Jews* recovered their liberty. Thus God was pleased to try and purify his people; giving them, in the sight of the idolatrous nations, signal proofs of his protection; and disposing them for the reception of the Messiah, who was soon to be sent unto them.

CHAPTER XL.

In this and the following chapter to the end of the Book, *Ezekiel* relates a vision which he saw fourteen years after the taking of *Jerusalem;* wherein are described the temple, and the service that was to be performed in it, the division of the land of *Canaan* to the twelve tribes of *Israel,* together with a plan of a new city. Some apply this prophecy to the temple that was rebuilt after the captivity, and to the state of the *Jews* at that time. But, considering that the second temple was not built as *Ezekiel* here represents; that the twelve tribes did not return into their own country; that the land of *Canaan* was not divided unto them; that *Jerusalem* was not rebuilt according to the plan laid down by *Ezekiel;* considering, further, that there are laws mentioned in these chapters which were never observed by the *Jews* since their return, and promises which have not been fulfilled; others are of opinion, this vision should be explained in a spiritual sense, and understand it of the Christian Church. Some think it represents what would have happened, if the twelve tribes had been converted and turned unto God. Lastly, There are others of opinion, that these predictions relate to the restoration of the *Jewish* nation in the later times, when they shall be converted. As all these explanations are attended with several difficulties, it would be hard to determine the sense of these chapters with certainty, and to make any particular reflections on them.

The End of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel.

THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET DANIEL.

ARGUMENT.

Daniel was very remarkable for his holiness, his great zeal, and the revelations he received. The testimony given of him by God, in the fourteenth and twenty-eighth chapters of Ezekiel; and what Jesus Christ says of him in the Gospel, proves that he was a very holy man, and a great prophet. He lived at Babylon, six hundred years before the coming of our Lord, and was there known as a prophet all the time of the captivity, and beyond it, that is, upwards of seventy years; so that he lived to a very advanced age. This book is made up of histories and remarkable prophecies. We have here the history of several considerable events, which happened at Babylon, both to the prophet Daniel, and to the kings of that country; and several prophecies, which describe the revolutions that were to happen in the kingdoms of the world, and particularly in the state of the Jews; as also the coming of the Messiah.

CHAPTER I.

In this chapter we see how *Daniel* was brought to *Babylon*, and educated at the court of king *Nebuchadnezzar*.

Reflections after reading the Chapter.

THERE are three reflections to be made upon this first chapter of *Daniel*. I. The first is, that by the providence of God, *Daniel* was carried captive to *Babylon* with the other *Jews*, was brought up at the king's court, and there became famous by his wisdom, and by the gift of prophecy. Providence so disposed all these events for the consolation of the captive *Jews*, and to make known the true God among those idolatrous people, and for the comfort and instruction of the church in all ages. II. We have a noble example of temperance, piety, and confidence in God, in the behaviour of *Daniel* and his three companions, who lived only upon water and pulse, and refused to eat of the king's meat, because the *Babylonians* ate some animals which it was not lawful for the *Jews* to eat, and because their meat was most commonly offered to idols. This piety and temperance of *Daniel* and his friends, who, though they were then but young, at which time men are most inclined to pleasure, and lived in an idolatrous court greatly addicted to sensuality, yet kept themselves pure and undefiled, should teach all, especially young persons, and those who live among the great, to shun luxury, to be sober, and never to do any thing contrary to religion or their consciences. III. We here observe, that God granted *Daniel*, together with bodily health, great understanding, and extraordinary gifts, and raised him to considerable employments. As God designed *Daniel* for great things, he trained him up for them from his youth, by the extraordinary gifts he bestowed on him, and by giving him favour with the powerful prince *Nebuchadnezzar*, and his successors, till the kingdom passed from the *Chaldeans* to the *Persians*. Thus God blesses those that fear him, bestows his favours upon sober and pious persons, and often grants them temporal blessings, as a reward of their godliness.

CHAPTER II.

THIS chapter gives an account of a dream of king *Nebuchadnezzar*, in which he saw a great image composed of divers metals. The astrologers, because they could not find out nor explain the dream, were condemned to death; but *Daniel* rehearsed and explained it to the king, who confessed that the God whom *Daniel* worshipped was the true God; and exalted the prophet and his three friends to great honours.

Reflections.

THESE are the principal reflections to be made upon this chapter: I. That God sent *Nebuchadnezzar* a dream, and then permitted that prince to forget it, that when *Daniel* told him his dream, he might be the better disposed to receive and believe what *Daniel* should tell him, and that he might confess that this dream came from God, who alone knows things to come. II. The incapacity of the wise men of *Babylon* to find out the dream, discovers very plainly that those people were impostors, and that none but the true God can discover hidden things. III. *Daniel's* promising the king that he would tell him his dream, and explain it to him, is a proof of his surprising faith and great confidence in God, since, if he could not have done what he promised, he must have been put to death. And since God, upon the prayers of *Daniel* and his friends, revealed *Nebuchadnezzar's* dream, we see that the prayers of the righteous are of great efficacy. But that which is chiefly to be observed is, the interpretation of this dream. *Daniel* shows, that there should be four powerful kingdoms succeeding one another: the first was that of the *Chaldeans*, which was then subsisting, and of which *Nebuchadnezzar* was king, but which was soon to come to an end; the second was that of the *Medes* and *Persians;* and the third, the kingdom of *Alexander* the Great and of the *Grecians*. As to the fourth kingdom, some will have it to be that

of the kings of *Syria* and *Egypt*, who reigned after *Alexander* the Great; and they think what is here said describes what was to befall the *Jews* under these kings, particularly under *Antiochus Epiphanes*, the cruel persecutor of the people of God. Others imagine the fourth to be the *Roman* empire; founding their opinion chiefly on this, that in the time of this fourth kingdom, God would establish his kingdom by *Jesus Christ;* and thus the ancients understood this prophecy. This is certain, that these empires succeeded each other; and after all these revolutions, the kingdom of God was manifested by our Lord *Jesus Christ*. We cannot sufficiently admire this noble prophecy, which extends to so many ages. It formerly served, as we learn at the end of this chapter, to make the true God known among the idolaters, and to render the king of *Babylon* favourable to the *Jews*. It ought to make still greater impression upon us, who have seen the accomplishment of this prophecy, and should fully convince us that there is a God who perfectly knows things to come. We ought also from hence to conclude, that the raising and overthrowing of kingdoms and states, and the various changes that happen in the world, proceed from God's providence, who has always in view the good of the church, and of those that fear him.

CHAPTER III.

KING *Nebuchadnezzar* causes a great image of gold to be made, and commands that every one should worship it; which the three friends of *Daniel* having refused to do, the king caused them to be thrown into the fiery furnace; but God preserved them miraculously in the fire, insomuch that *Nebuchadnezzar* being astonished at the miracle, confessed and publicly proclaimed the power of the true God.

Reflections.

IN the remarkable history here set down, we may observe these four things: I. The folly, pride, and

impiety of *Nebuchadnezzar*, who set up this golden image, and commanded all his subjects, upon pain of death, to worship it. Idolatry and superstition are always cruel and extravagant, and in *Nebuchadnezzar* we have the picture of haughty, idolatrous, and persecuting princes. II. We here see the admirable constancy and generous resolution of the three *Hebrews* who, without hesitating, answered the king, that they chose rather to be thrown into the fiery furnace than to obey his command. This is a noble example of faith and constancy, which teaches us, that the fear of men will never induce good men to sin against God. When their duty to God is concerned, they do not deliberate what course to take; but are always ready, when called to it, boldly to expose their lives for his glory, and in the defence of true religion. III. The *Chaldeans*, who cast the three *Hebrews* into the furnace, were themselves consumed by the flames, and *Daniel's* three friends were so miraculously preserved by the angel of the Lord, that the fire did not do them the least harm. Thus God punished the cruel and idolatrous *Chaldeans*, made them feel the effects of his power, rendered the miracle wrought in behalf of the *Hebrews* more visible and incontestable, and rewarded the zeal and piety of his servants who exposed their lives for his sake. St. *Paul* particularly ascribes this miraculous deliverance to the faith of *Daniel's* three friends, when he says, *That by faith they quenched the violence of the fire.* Let us from hence learn to acknowledge the great efficacy of faith; that God never wants power to deliver those that suffer for his sake; that he supports his children in their afflictions; that he is with them in the greatest dangers, and gives them a happy issue out of them. Lastly, The zeal which *Nebuchadnezzar* expressed for the glory of the God whom *Daniel* worshipped, the homage he paid him, and his commendation of the faith and steadfastness of the three *Hebrews*, should lead us to acknowledge and adore the power of that great God, who alone does

marvellous things, and who displays his power in behalf of those who serve him faithfully, and put their trust in him. The behaviour of this heathen prince should engage Christian princes and magistrates to honour God, to cause religion to be had in reverence, to restrain impiety, and not to suffer any insults to be offered to the Divine Majesty.

CHAPTER IV.

THIS chapter consists of three parts: I. An account of a dream, in which king *Nebuchadnezzar* saw a great tree, whose branches were lopt off. II. *Daniel's* interpretation of the dream, who told the king that he should be driven from his kingdom, and afterwards restored to it again. III. We see the accomplishment of the dream, and of all that *Daniel* had foretold.

Reflections.

THIS history furnishes us with many instructions. I. What happened to *Nebuchadnezzar*, when he was in the height of his glory, teaches us, that prosperity is a dangerous state; that men easily fall from a state of plenty and grandeur into pride and security, and that then they are most in danger of God's judgment; pride generally going before a fall. II. Observe, That as God had formerly by a dream revealed his will to *Pharaoh*, he was pleased likewise to reveal himself to *Nebuchadnezzar*, informing him what was to befall him, by a dream which *Daniel* interpreted; that this prince might confess that this humiliation proceeded from God. Thus God, in his loving-kindness, warns men of their approaching miseries, and teaches them how they may avoid them. III. The counsel which *Daniel* gave the king, *to break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor*, teaches us to repair, by all possible means, the sins we have committed, and that works of charity have a peculiar efficacy to avert the wrath of God, when they proceed from true repentance. IV. Observe the punishment of *Nebuchadnezzar*, who was driven from

his kingdom, deprived of his reason, and reduced to the state of a brute; this prince falling into a madness and deep melancholy, which made him brutish, and for a time rendered him unfit for human society. This event, which heathen historians make mention of, was dispensed of God, as is observed in this chapter, and as the king afterwards confessed, that men might know that the Almighty God ruleth over kings; that he does whatsoever he pleases; that he exalts and abases whom he will; and particularly, that he is just, and knows how to humble the proud. Lastly, We have seen how *Nebuchadnezzar* recovered his senses and humbled himself, and gave public marks of his fear of the true God, ordering all his subjects to revere him, and then was restored to his kingdom. Thus we see how God's chastisements bring men to a sense of their duty, and procure the return of his favour. And *Nebuchadnezzar's* solemn acknowledgment of the majesty and justice of God, teaches the princes and great men of the world their obligation to worship God, and with all their might to promote his glory.

CHAPTER V.

KING *Belshazzar* making a great feast, at the time *Babylon* was besieged by the *Medes*, and profaning the sacred vessels of the temple of *Jerusalem*, saw a hand, which wrote upon the wall the decree of his death, as *Daniel* interpreted it. This decree was executed immediately, *Belshazzar* being slain that very night, and *Babylon* taken by *Darius*. By this means the monarchy of the *Chaldeans* passed to the *Medes* and *Persians*, as *Daniel* and the other prophets had foretold.

Reflections.

THE history recorded in this chapter is very remarkable; but what is chiefly to be observed is, I. That while king *Belshazzar* was making a great feast for his nobles, giving himself up to mirth and dishonouring the true God, by drinking in the sacred vessels of the

temple of *Jerusalem* to the honour of idols, God caused a hand to appear writing his condemnation; that this prodigy, and *Daniel's* explanation of it, might convince that idolatrous people, that the same God, whose temple *Nebuchadnezzar*, the grandfather of *Belshazzar*, had destroyed, was going to overthrow the empire of the *Chaldeans*. II. The very great confusion and uneasiness of *Belshazzar* at the sight of the hand, shows, that nothing is more weak and timorous than a guilty conscience: and that the divine judgments overtake the ungodly, when they think themselves most secure. III. Observe that *Daniel* reproached the king for not making a better use of the judgments with which God had chastised his grandfather *Nebuchadnezzar*; for persisting in his pride, and setting himself against God, by profaning the vessels of the temple of *Jerusalem*, and praising his idols, instead of giving glory to God. This is a visible proof of the divine vengeance on those whose heart is lifted up with prosperity; on the profane and ungodly, who instead of reverencing him from whom they receive life and breath, and all things, have the insolence to exalt themselves against him; and on those who do not improve the warnings he gives them, the afflictions he visits them with, nor the examples he sets before their eyes. Lastly, The death of *Belshazzar*, and the ruin of the *Babylonish* empire, which then passed to the *Medes* and *Persians*, is an event the more remarkable, as it had been foretold, not only by *Daniel*, but by *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and the other prophets, who had expressly foretold that *Babylon* should be taken in the night, while the king and the princes were rejoicing; which is also confirmed by the writers of profane history. This history, therefore, should be looked upon as a proof of the divine authority of the sacred writings, and of the truth of religion; and should lead us to adore the infinite power and wisdom of God, and the wonders of his providence, which with so much wisdom, justice, and goodness, directs all events.

CHAPTER VI.

I. *Daniel* is raised by king *Darius* to great honour, at which the great men of the kingdom being jealous, obtain an edict to forbid that any prayers should be made, for the space of thirty days, to any god or man whatever, except to the king. II. But *Daniel* continuing as usual to pray to God publicly, was accused of violating the king's decree, and was cast into the den of lions, where God miraculously preserved him. III. The king, astonished at the miracle, commands that the God of *Daniel* should be worshipped by all men.

Reflections.

THERE are several very important reflections to be made upon this chapter: I. The fidelity with which *Daniel* served king *Darius*, is an example for those in public posts to discharge their duty with integrity. II. In the decree that *Darius* published, upon the importunity of *Daniel's* enemies, we observe, on one hand, the folly and impiety of a prince who desired to be worshipped as a god; and, on the other, the evils that arise from envy and jealousy, and how dangerous it is to listen to those who make use of craft, slander, and violence, to destroy the innocent. III. We here see the zeal of *Daniel*, who had been religious and devout in the greatest prosperity, and so continues, when he is in the greatest danger on that very account. He is no way intimidated by the king's edict; continues to worship his God, and that publicly, without fearing the danger to which he was exposed; lest, if he had done it in secret, he might be thought to dissemble his faith, and obey the king's command. On such occasions we must make public profession of our faith, without the least dissimulation, and without betraying our consciences for fear of men. IV. It is to be observed, that *Darius* was weak enough to consent to *Daniel's* death, though he thought him innocent. God did not think fit to deliver his servant by means of king *Darius*; but suffered *Daniel* to be cast into the den of lions, be-

cause he designed to send his angel to deliver him in a more glorious manner. The Scripture says, that *Daniel* was thus preserved, *because innocency was found in him, and he believed in his God.* This was a glorious reward of his fidelity, and a surprising effect of his faith, as St. *Paul* observes in his Epistle to the *Hebrews.* Thus God protects his servants; if they seem sometimes to be forsaken, and past recovery, he at last happily delivers them out of all their trials. V. Another reflection to be made is, that the lions had no power over *Daniel;* but his enemies were devoured by them immediately. This makes the divine protection of *Daniel* the more visible; and thus God brings upon sinners the evil they designed for others. Lastly, The solemn acknowledgment that king *Darius* made of the majesty of the true God, engages us to adore the goodness, justice, and almighty power of the Lord in all things, to publish his marvellous works, and to admire the ways of his providence, who made use of this king's edict, and of *Nebuchadnezzar,* and several other heathen princes, to make himself known among those idolatrous nations. Christian princes ought seriously to attend to these things, if they would not have these idolatrous princes rise up in judgment against them.

CHAPTER VII.

THIS chapter contains the vision which the prophet *Daniel* had of the four beasts, and the explanation which an angel gave him of that vision; telling him, there would be four great empires; and that in the time of the fourth, the kingdom of God should be established.

Reflections.

WE ought to meditate upon this prophecy with great attention. This mysterious dream which God sent to *Daniel,* and the angel's explanation of it, denote the very same thing as the vision of the great

image mentioned in the second chapter of this book; namely, that four great empires should succeed each other; the first, the empire of the *Babylonians;* the second, that of the *Medes* and *Persians;* the third, the *Grecian* empire; and the fourth, as was observed on the second chapter, either that of the kings of *Syria* and *Egypt*, called the *Seleucides* and the *Legides*, or that of the *Romans.* According to the first interpretation, that horn, that is, that power which would make war against the saints, but was to be destroyed, is king *Antiochus*, who so cruelly treated the *Jews*, and reduced them to the utmost extremities. If we follow the second interpretation, that power means Antichrist, who was to appear in the church, but whom God would destroy; after which the kingdom of God would be fully manifested. These prophecies, which extend to so many ages, and foretold so long beforehand these great revolutions, show, that *Daniel* spake by divine inspiration; that things to come are perfectly known to God, and that he rules over all things. We ought principally to acknowledge, that among all these revolutions, God had in view the establishing his kingdom among men; and that the famous prophecy, which foretells that the Son of Man should receive of God a kingdom and dominion over all things, and that his kingdom should have no end, and that the saints should reign with him, undoubtedly relate to our Lord *Jesus Christ;* and that he has secured eternal glory and perfect happiness for all his saints and faithful servants.

CHAPTER VIII.

THIS chapter has two parts. The first is, the vision that *Daniel* saw of the ram and of the goat, fighting with one another. The second is the interpretation of that vision by the angel *Gabriel;* the substance of which is, that a king of *Javan*, that is, of *Greece*, should overthrow the monarchy of the *Medes* and *Persians;* as it happened when *Alexander* the Great con-

quered *Darius*, the king of *Persia*. Then the angel declares, that after the death of *Alexander*, there should arise four horns, which signified that his empire should be divided into four chief kingdoms; and that out of one of them there should arise a king, proud and cruel, who would grievously persecute the *Jews*, and cause the service of God to cease for the space of three years and a half; but that he should at last be destroyed. This was *Antiochus Epiphanes*, king of *Syria*.

Reflections.

THE prophecy contained in this chapter has been fully accomplished, and by the event is made so clear, that there remains not the least obscurity in it. The empire of the *Medes* and *Persians* was raised to a great height, but was destroyed by *Alexander* the Great, who conquered *Darius*, king of *Persia*. The monarchy of *Alexander* was after his death divided into four principal kingdoms; and from one of them, which was that of *Syria*, rose up *Antiochus*, surnamed the Illustrious, who cruelly persecuted the *Jews*, and made divine service to cease for three years and a half; after which the *Jews* were delivered from that persecution, the temple was purified, and *Antiochus* felt the effects of the Divine vengeance. From this it indisputably follows, that *Daniel*, who told so long beforehand all these events, was divinely inspired. To this general reflection, which so evidently proves the truth of religion, we must add one particular consideration; which is, that God was pleased to reveal all these things to *Daniel*, and make known to him what great miseries *Antiochus* would bring upon the *Jews*, but that they should be delivered from the tyranny of that prince. It was necessary that the *Jews* should be warned of this, that when this persecution came upon them, they might with constancy bear up under it. This engages us to consider, that God, whose providence governs all things, overrules in a particular manner the events which concern the Church; he sometimes permits it to be oppressed for

a while, but never quite forsakes it, and always sets bounds to the malice of persecutors. Lastly, We ought to pray, that as the sanctuary was formerly cleansed from the abominations introduced by *Antiochus*, God would also purify his Church, and purge Christianity from the many pollutions which prevail in it.

CHAPTER IX.

THIS chapter contains two things: I. An excellent prayer, in which *Daniel* confesses the sins of the *Jews*, and implores the mercy of God upon them. II. A most remarkable prophecy, showing, that from the restoration of *Jerusalem*, to the coming of the Messiah, there would be seventy weeks of years, that is, four hundred and ninety years. We see likewise in this prophecy, that the Messiah was to die; that the *Romans* would take and destroy *Jerusalem*, and cause a general desolation throughout all the country of the *Jews*.

Reflections.

Daniel's prayer is an excellent pattern of that humility with which we should acknowledge and confess our sins before God, especially in calamitous times. We learn in this prayer, that the sins of men kindle the wrath of God against them; and that the way to appease it, is to betake ourselves to the mercy of God, with a sincere repentance and reformation of our lives. *Daniel's* prayer for the restoration of *Jerusalem* and the temple, shows, that it is the duty of all sincere members of the church to be concerned for it, and to offer up continual and devout prayers for its prosperity. The prophecy of the seventy weeks, is one of the most express prophecies in all the Old Testament: it clearly determines the time that was to pass between the decree for rebuilding *Jerusalem*, and the death of the Messiah. The angel who spake to *Daniel* says, the time was to be four hundred and ninety years, to be reckoned from the decree made in favour of the *Jews* by *Artaxerxes*, surnamed *Lon-*

gimanus. This prophecy expressly declares, that at the end of this term the Messiah should come; that he would make an atonement for sin by his death; that he would establish and confirm the covenant of God with men; and that afterwards the *Romans* should come and destroy the city and temple of *Jerusalem.* All these things have been exactly fulfilled at the time and in the manner foretold, as we are most certainly informed by history. Thus we have in this prophecy an immoveable support of our faith, as it proves beyond contradiction the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, and the truth of the Christian Religion; showing, in the clearest manner, that *Jesus* is the promised Messiah, who has redeemed us by his death, and strongly engaging us to believe in him as our Saviour, and to submit to the doctrines which he preached.

CHAPTER X.

THIS chapter, and the two following, contain a revelation made to *Daniel*; the design of which was to inform him what was to befall the *Jews,* from the reign of *Cyrus,* king of *Persia,* to the end of the persecution. In this chapter *Daniel* relates a vision of an angel that appeared to him in the shape of a man clothed in linen; the fright which the vision caused; and how the angel comforted him, and prepared him to hear the things he had to tell him.

Reflections.

OF what the angel said to *Daniel* in this chapter this is the sum; That the prayers of that prophet in behalf of the *Jews* had been heard; but that the kings of *Persia* would oppose them; that the *Jews* would be crossed in their design of building the temple; that, nevertheless, God would protect them; that the prince of *Javan,* or of the *Greeks,* that is, *Alexander* the Great, would come against the *Persians;* and that the principal angels, such as he who talked with *Daniel,* and *Michael* the archangel, would be employed

by God to defend, and assist the *Jews*, and to strengthen the kings who were for the *Jews*, as, at the beginning of the following chapter, the angel who here speaks is said to have strengthened king *Darius*. I. The affliction and fastings of *Daniel*, who mourned for three weeks, should be considered as the effect of his zeal for the restoration of the *Jews*; it being the character of pious and zealous persons to afflict themselves when the glory of God is obstructed, and to offer up prayers for the peace and prosperity of the Church. II. We see here how much God loves those who fear him, and serve him faithfully; and how great regard he has to their prayers and to their grief. This evidently appears, from the vision of the angel who was sent to *Daniel*, and the kind manner in which he spake to him; assuring him that he was acceptable to God, and that his prayers had been heard. III. What the angel said to *Daniel*, that he had laboured and fought for the *Jews*, against those who sought their ruin, is a proof of God's care of his Church, and that he protects it in the worst of times, and finds means to deliver it. This shows too, that God makes use of the ministry of angels, to execute his designs, and for the good of those he is pleased to bless. But what ought to fill us with the greatest confidence is, that *Jesus Christ*, the head and king of the Church, watches over it continually, and displays his power in its behalf.

CHAPTER XI.

THE angel goes on speaking to *Daniel*, and revealing to him things to come. This prophecy has three parts. I. It points out the end of the *Persian* empire, and the establishment of the *Grecian* monarchy by *Alexander* the Great. II. The dividing of that monarchy after his death, and the wars that were to be between the kings of *Egypt* and the kings of *Syria*. III. The reign of *Antiochus*, king of *Syria*, his wars with the king of *Egypt*, and particularly his persecution of the *Jews*, his attempt to abolish the divine worship, and

set up idolatry; and, lastly, the destruction of that impious and cruel prince.

Reflections.

THE sense and substance of this chapter is this; That there would be three kings in *Persia* after *Cyrus*, who then reigned; that after these would arise a powerful prince, namely, *Xerxes;* that *Alexander* the Great would come and destroy the *Persian* empire; that after his death his kingdom should be divided, and out of it two principal ones be formed; namely, the kingdom of *Syria*, called in this chapter the kingdom of the north; and that of *Egypt*, called the kingdom of the south; that these two kingdoms should make war upon each other; that among the kings of *Syria* there should be one who would usurp the kingdom by artifice, which was *Antiochus Epiphanes;* that this king would be several times at war with the king of *Egypt*, would persecute the *Jews*, put great numbers of them to death, and profane the temple of *Jerusalem;* but that the *Jews* would resist him, and recover their liberty; that this *Antiochus* would plunder the temple, would make another expedition into *Egypt;* and that after this God would bring him to his end. Though this chapter is attended with obscurity to those who are unacquainted with ancient history, yet ought not the reading of it to be neglected, since it is one of the clearest and most circumstantial prophecies in the Old Testament. It comprises the history of about four hundred years, and in the historians of those times we meet with an exact account of the events here predicted. This chapter is therefore very remarkable; furnishing us with the most evident and convincing proofs imaginable of the divine authority of the Scriptures, and presenting us with several particular reflections on the revolutions and wars that happen in the world, on the designs of Providence in these various events, on the persecutions to which the church is exposed, the deliverance vouchsafed by God, and the tragical end

which is usually the fate of tyrannical and persecuting princes.

CHAPTER XII.

THIS chapter is a sequel of the prophecy contained in the foregoing. The angel who spake to *Daniel* here describes two things: I. The deliverance that God would grant to his people, and the glorious reward he would bestow upon those that had been persecuted by *Antiochus*. II. The continuance of that persecution, which was to be three years and a half.

Reflections.

WE are to observe from this chapter, I. That God has always been the defender of his church, and that he has protected it, when it was assaulted with the greatest violence. Of this we have a proof in what is here said, that *Michael*, the archangel, should take the part of the *Jews;* and in the glorious deliverance God vouchsafed them, after they had been cruelly persecuted by *Antiochus*. II. These words deserve our serious attention; *Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.* As this promise related to the zealous *Jews*, who should defend the cause of religion, and suffer death under the persecution of *Antiochus;* so we cannot doubt but these words relate likewise to the resurrection of the dead, and to the difference that shall be made in the life to come between the righteous and the wicked. This is the doctrine which *Jesus Christ* has taught us more clearly in the Gospel, and in terms not unlike those of *Daniel*. III. When the angel says, that the wise *Jews*, who should signalize their fidelity in time of persecution, should be crowned with extraordinary glory; this, which deserves to be well considered, should inspire us with great zeal in promoting the glory of God, even at the hazard of our lives, and in contributing all that is in our power to the edification and salvation of others. Lastly, When we consider, that the

time of the persecution of *Antiochus*, and the number of the days it was to last, are here so expressly described, we may infer from hence, that God keeps times in his own power; that he has set bounds which wicked men and the enemies of his glory shall not pass; and that what he has resolved shall always come to pass at the time, and in the manner that he has decreed. These are, for the church in general, and for every particular believer, powerful motives to trust in God, even in times of most severe trial: to rely on his Providence, and to wait with patience in the discharging of their duty till his decrees be accomplished.

The End of the Book of the Prophet Daniel.

THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET

HOSEA.

ARGUMENT.

Hosea, the first of the twelve minor prophets, was sent to foretell the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes, as well as of the kingdom of Judah. He also foretold the return of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles; and prophesied about fourscore years.

CHAPTERS I. II. III.

In the three first chapters *Hosea* represents, under the emblem of a marriage with a whorish woman, and of children born of her, that the *Israelites* were fallen into idolatry; that God, to punish them, would cast them off, and reduce them to the utmost misery; that nevertheless, he would have pity on them, and receive them again into covenant.

Reflections on Chapters i. ii. iii.

We may in general observe on this prophecy, the great goodness of God, who sent *Hosea* and other prophets to the people of the ten tribes to recover them from the idolatry which was established in the kingdom, and to exhort them to repentance. What we read at the beginning of this book looks like a real history, and gives some room to imagine, that *Hosea* ac-

tually married a woman who had led a disorderly life, but did not persist in it; and it may be said, that marrying her by God's command, he acted lawfully in so doing. However, as such a marriage seems not consistent with decency, especially in a prophet, we may consider it as a parable and allegory. The prophets often relate things which passed only in a vision, or in a figure, as if they had really happened; which we have several express instances of in their writings: and the name of the woman which *Hosea* is said to marry, and the other circumstances mentioned, do not prove it to be a real history; any more than we may conclude that the parable of the wicked rich man is not a parable, because the name of *Lazarus* is mentioned in it, and the rich man is said to have had five brethren. By what *Hosea* here relates, God designed to show, that the *Israelites* had forsaken his service to worship idols, as the adulterous woman forsakes her husband. The name of *Jezreel*, which is given to the first son that was born, signified, that God would punish the family of *Jehu*, king of *Israel*, for the idolatry and other sins of that prince and his successors. This threatening was executed; *Zechariah*, the son of *Jeroboam* the second, in whose reign *Hosea* prophesied, being the last king of the descendants of *Jehu*. The second child was a daughter, named *Loruhamah*; which name signified, that God would no longer have compassion on the *Israelites*, but that they should feel the effects of his vengeance; which also came to pass. The name of the third was *Laommi*, which meant, that the *Israelites* were no more the people of God. After this, *Hosea* foretells the calamities that were going to fall upon the *Jews*, for the punishment of their idolatry. However, God declares, that he still entertained sentiments of love for that people; and that after he had punished them, he would have pity on them, and they should be converted. This is the meaning and design of these chapters; wherein we have a lively representation of the infidelity of those who break

their covenant with God, and of the Divine vengeance on them; as well as of his mercy on those who with true repentance turn unto him.

CHAPTER IV.

I. *Hosea* declares that God, provoked by the many abominations which prevailed in the kingdom of *Israel*, even among the priests, and particularly by idolatry, which is here called adultery, would shortly destroy that kingdom. II. He exhorts the men of *Judah* not to imitate the ten tribes in their idolatry, and in the impieties committed at *Gilgal* and *Bethel*.

Reflections.

It appears from this chapter, that in the time of *Hosea* the kingdom of *Israel* was filled with impiety, injustice, dissoluteness, and all manner of wickedness; that even the priests themselves were extremely corrupted; and that this general depravity would soon expose the *Israelites*, as it happened when they were destroyed by the king of *Assyria*, and carried into his land. These reproofs and these threatenings teach us, that when there is no fear of God in any country, when sins multiply therein, and are committed without restraint, and men cannot be reduced to a sense of their duty, God withdraws his protection from them, and visits them with his judgments. The exhortations which *Hosea* addressed to the *Jews* of *Judah*, to avoid falling into the sins and idolatry of the men of *Israel*, show us, that those whom God has particularly honoured with the knowledge of himself, ought not to imitate the wicked in their disorders; but on the contrary, keep inviolably to their duty, if they desire to escape his most severe judgments.

CHAPTER V.

I. *Hosea* reproves the priests, the magistrates, and the princes of *Israel*, for being the occasion of the sins of the people, and of their ruin. II. He declares, that God would have no regard to the sacrifice of the

Jews; but would destroy them all, both those of *Ephraim*, that is, of the kingdom of *Israel*, and those of *Judah;* and that the aid of the king of *Assyria* would not secure them from the evils that were coming upon them.

Reflections.

What is remarkable in this chapter is, I. That the corruption and ruin of the people proceed commonly from their spiritual and temporal guides, when they neglect to do their duty, and break the laws of religion and justice. II. That God does not accept the external service that is paid him by hypocrites and ungodly men, who provoke him with their sins. III. That it is in vain to have recourse to men, when God is not on our side, and that there is no way to appease him, when we have offended him, but by confessing our sins and turning unto him by sincere repentance.

CHAPTER VI.

I. *Hosea* exhorts the *Israelites* to be converted, and promises them, that if they did truly repent, God would have pity on them, and restore them. II. He reproaches the ten tribes for their insincerity in their devotions; and tells them, that was the reason God threatened by his prophets to destroy them. III. He complains, that instead of becoming acceptable to God by their obedience, they broke his covenant, and gave themselves up, both priests and people, to all manner of wickedness, and especially to idolatry.

Reflections.

This chapter teaches us, I. That when God threatens or punishes men, they cannot avert or appease his wrath, without a speedy and sincere return to their duty. II. That piety and repentance, which soon passes away, and does not produce a steady reformation, is useless and unprofitable. III. That what God requires and delights in above all things is, that men should know and fear him; that they should exercise mercy and charity. This is ex-

pressed in these words of Hosea, which our Saviour quotes in the Gospel: *I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God, more than burnt-offerings.* The end of this chapter teaches us, that when those, whom God has received into covenant, transgress, and fall into unbelief, God deprives them of his favour and protection, and makes them a public example: This the *Israelites* experienced, as *Hosea* and the other prophets had threatened them.

CHAPTER VII.

God complains here, I. That at the time he would have brought back *Ephraim*, that is to say, the *Israelites* of the ten tribes, from their idolatry and other sins, they still persisted in them. II. That their kings and princes were the first to draw the people into rebellion; and that for this reason they should be consumed by the fire of God's wrath, and become a prey to strangers. III. God declares, that it would be in vain for them to seek assistance from the *Egyptians* or *Assyrians*. IV. He reproaches them for not being sincere in their conversion when he had chastened them.

Reflections.

We are to observe here, I. That as the *Israelites* did obstinately persist in their sins, though God endeavoured to reclaim them, so men often fly from God, and offend him more resolutely, at the time when he seeks to call them to him. II. That the depravity of the people usually proceeds from the bad example of those that govern them, who infect them, and expose them to a total destruction. III. That it is in vain to have recourse to human means, when God is not on our side; and that he even makes use of those very means to punish those who put their trust in them; as the *Jews* found by experience, who expected to meet with assistance from the *Egyptians*, and were punished by those very people. Lastly, The *Jews*, who cried and groaned under the pressure of their afflictions, but did not turn to God, are like many among Christians,

who complain and grieve in time of adversity, and seem to fly to God, but are not touched with true repentance, their sorrow being nothing but a worldly sorrow, and not producing a sincere reformation.

CHAPTER VIII.

I. THIS chapter contains more threatenings denounced by God against the *Israelites* of the ten tribes, because they had rebelled against him by setting up other kings than those of the house of *David;* and by substituting idolatry, and the worship of the golden calves, instead of the true service of God; and by seeking assistance from the *Assyrians.* II. The prophet declares that the *Israelites,* for these and all their sins, were near their destruction, and that after them the *Jews* of the kingdom of *Judah* should likewise be rooted out.

Reflections.

THE chief reflection to be made upon *Hosea's* reproaches of the *Israelites* for their revolting from the obedience they owed to God, and forsaking his covenant and service, is, that we cannot leave the worship that God requires of us, without exposing ourselves to his most severe vengeance. Upon which we are to observe, that it is not only by idolatry that men forsake God, but that they may do this by not paying him the true worship he requires of us, which is to serve him with a pure heart, to love him above all things, and to obey him. If therefore the *Israelites* were punished so severely for their idolatry, Christians who rebel against God, and disobey the laws of *Jesus Christ,* have reason to expect punishments much more severe.

CHAPTER IX.

THE substance of this chapter is, I. That the *Israelites,* because they had forsaken God to serve idols, should be driven out of their own land, and dispersed in *Egypt* and *Assyria;* and that their sacri-

fices were rejected. II. That their destruction when it came upon them, would show that false prophets had deceived them. III. That they were as corrupt as the *Israelites* of *Gibeah* formerly were; and that the idolatries long committed in their land, particularly at *Gilgal*, would bring upon them and their children a desolation which they would never recover from.

Reflections.

LET us seriously consider what happened formerly to the *Israelites* for forsaking the true service of God, embracing an idolatrous religion and false worship, and giving heed to false prophets rather than to the prophets of the Lord. This people, whom God had so much loved, and with whom he had made a covenant, were deprived of his protection and the privileges they enjoyed, and dispersed among strange nations. Thus we see what ingratitude towards God, and unfaithfulness in his service, expose men to: God at last rejects those who will not hear his voice, and after he has spared them for a long while, visits them for their wickedness, and executes the judgments he had denounced against them.

CHAPTER X.

THE substance of this chapter is, that because the *Israelites* had persisted in their idolatry, and their other sins, and had even increased them more and more, they should be carried away from their country; that *Samaria*, which was their capital city, should be taken, with its king; and that God would bring against them a people who should reduce them to the utmost desolation. For the right understanding of this chapter it must be observed, that *Ephraim* signifies the *Israelites* of the ten tribes; that *Bethel*, or *Bethaven*, was the place where they worshipped idols; that the *Calves*, or the young heifers, were the idols they worshipped in that place; and that the *Chemarim* were the priests who sacrificed to those false gods.

Reflections.

On this, as well as the other chapters of this book, it is to be remarked, that all those miseries which *Hosea* and the other prophets had denounced against the *Israelites*, overtook them when *Salmaneser* came and destroyed *Samaria*, and carried the ten tribes into *Assyria*. Their total ruin, therefore, is to be attributed to their idolatry and impenitence; since, instead of forsaking their sins, they increased them more and more. In this example every one may see that God is just, and that he will not suffer the contempt of his covenant to go unpunished. And, when we hear the prophets frequently reproaching the *Jews* for their idolatry, and denouncing the Divine vengeance against them for it, we should remember, that to break the commandments of God, and to turn our heart from him to bestow it upon the world, is to be guilty of a kind of idolatry, which is not less odious to him in Christians, than that which *Hosea* complained of was in the *Jews*, and which he will not fail to punish, by excluding from his presence, and from his kingdom, those who become guilty of it.

CHAPTER XI.

The prophet represents to the *Jews* of the ten tribes, that notwithstanding the kindness God had shown to their fathers, in bringing them out of *Egypt*, and all that he had done to draw them to him, they had forsaken him, and were fallen into idolatry, and all kind of sins, which would cause God to deliver them to the king of *Assyria*. However, the Lord testifies, that he was moved with compassion towards them, because they were his people, and therefore promised he would not destroy them utterly, but would bring them again from their dispersion.

Reflections.

I. God reproaches the *Jews* for making so ill a return for his love to them and to their fathers, and

for the mercies he had conferred on them; which is a warning to us, not to be ungrateful to the Lord for all his kindnesses, and especially for his spiritual favours, which are infinitely more valuable than those he had bestowed upon the *Jews*. II. *Hosea* here teaches us, that God draws men, and endeavours to unite them to him with the cords of love; that is to say, by kind and gentle means, before he makes use of severity against them. III. We see the great goodness of God towards the guilty *Jews* in his declaring, that he could not resolve to destroy the *Israelites;* that he was moved with compassion towards them; that after he had chastened them, he would have pity on them. God is always merciful towards men, sparing them when he punishes them, and returns with his favour and loving-kindness as soon as the affliction has humbled them, and brought them again to their duty.

CHAPTER XII.

I. *Hosea* complains, that the *Israelites* of the ten tribes had set up idolatrous worship, whilst the worship God had prescribed was observed in the kingdom of *Judah;* and he threatens likewise the men of *Judah* for falling into idolatry, in imitation of the ten tribes. II. He reminds the *Israelites* of the blessings God had conferred on their father *Jacob*, and hi posterity, in bringing them out of *Egypt*, and leading them through the wilderness; but reproaches them for the ungrateful returns they had made for all the mercies they had received, and for provoking him by their worship of idols.

Reflections.

THE design of this chapter was to put the *Jews* in mind of their ingratitude and infidelity towards God, who had not ceased to shower his favours upon them, in order to bring them to a sense of their duty. This should remind us of the inestimable blessings God has vouchsafed us, in giving us the knowledge of himself,

and redeeming us by his Son; and should make us sensible how great our guilt must be, and how severely our ingratitude will be punished, if we make not a suitable return for so many benefits. Those words of the prophet deserve a serious attention, where he says, *Jacob had power over the angel and prevailed, when he wept and made supplication unto him.* The example of this patriarch teaches us, that God will refuse nothing to those who call upon him with humility and perseverance; and that the way to obtain the blessing of God, is to adhere to him by faith, and a sincere desire of his grace and blessing.

CHAPTER XIII.

I. *Hosea* says, that the people of *Ephraim*, that is, the *Jews* of the ten tribes, were formerly very powerful, and a terror to their enemies; but that, since their idolatry and disobedience against God, who had brought them out of *Egypt*, and blessed them, they had exposed themselves to his wrath. II. He foretells that their kingdom should be destroyed, and that *Samaria*, their capital city, should be laid waste; whereas, had they continued faithful to their God, he would have secured them from all these misfortunes.

Reflections.

THIS chapter engages us to reflect on what formerly befel the *Israelites*, for making so ill a return for the divine favour towards them, and abusing his patience and mercies. God, who had been their protector, and the protector of their fathers, declared against them, and caused them to be destroyed by the *Assyrians*. Let us from hence learn to acknowledge, that men bring upon themselves all the evil that befalls them. The Lord is full of kindness, and has only merciful intentions towards them; but when they return his favours with ingratitude, and are insensible of his long-suffering, they lose their share in his love, and at last feel his severest vengeance.

CHAPTER XIV.

I. The prophet exhorts the people of *Israel* to fly to God by repentance, not to put their trust in the *Assyrians*, and to renounce the worship of idols. II. He promises a return of the divine favour to those who should be converted.

Reflections.

This last chapter of *Hosea* contains these two instructions: I. That when we have offended God, and fallen into rebellion, we must recover by a speedy conversion, by having recourse to his mercy, and making promises of amendment, and by serving him faithfully. II. That God is always disposed to receive into favour those that repent, and to do them good after he has chastised them. God's promises of pardon to the *Israelites* showed what would happen to those among them who were recalled into their own country with the other *Jews* who returned from *Babylon*; that God would bless them, and they should for ever renounce the worship of idols. The use we are to make of the example of that people, and of the warnings contained in this prophecy, is expressed in the last words of this Book: *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? Prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein.*

The End of the Book of the Prophet Hosea.

THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET JOEL.

ARGUMENT.

Joel prophesied in the kingdom of Judah; but we do not know exactly at what time. The occasion of his prophecy is an extraordinary drought and famine which happened in that kingdom. He exhorts the Jews to humiliation and repentance; he likewise foretells their return from the Babylonish captivity; and what was to happen in the last days, when the Messiah should come.

CHAPTER I.

JOEL here describes the desolation to which *Judea* was shortly to be reduced, by drought, by vermin, and by famine; and exhorts the people to humble themselves before God, and to have recourse to his mercy by prayer and repentance.

Reflections after reading the Chapter.

THE famine with which the *Jews* were visited in the time of *Joel*, should be considered in these two lights; first, as a chastisement from God on that people; and secondly, as a forerunner of the desolation

which the *Babylonians* would cause in *Judea;* whereupon we may make two reflections. I. That God has several ways of chastising men; he sometimes punishes guilty nations by drought, by vermin, by barrenness, and by famine, as it happened formerly to the kingdom of *Judah.* II. That when God sends any of these scourges, we must betake ourselves to him by fasting, humiliation, and earnest prayer, and endeavour to prevail upon him by a sincere repentance, lest still heavier judgments overtake us. By this means temporal calamities are sometimes averted; but we are sure thereby to obtain pardon of sins, and deliverance from the miseries of the soul, and the punishments of the life to come.

CHAPTER II.

THIS chapter has three parts; I. *Joel* describes, in a figurative manner, the calamities that were to fall upon the *Jews,* by famine, by vermin, and by the *Chaldeans.* II. He exhorts them all to humble themselves, particularly the priests, and to turn away the anger of the Lord by a solemn fast, and by prayer; which if they did, he assures them God would have compassion on them. III. He adds a very express prophecy concerning the return from the captivity, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which *Jesus Christ* was to bestow upon men after his ascension into heaven, and before the last destruction of *Jerusalem.*

Reflections.

WE may learn from this chapter, as well as the former, I. That famine, war, and other calamities, are the effects of God's justice, and the methods he uses for the punishment of men. II. When God appears provoked, we must endeavour to pacify his wrath by prayer and fasting; but that the true manner of humbling ourselves by fasting is, to have the heart broken with real sorrow, and to be converted to God by a sincere reformation. This is a general

duty; but the prophet's particular address to the priests, shows that this is, in a peculiar manner, the duty of the ministers of religion. III. We have here very positive promises, that God would redeem his people; that he would pour out his spirit upon all flesh in the latter days; and that then all who should call upon the name of the Lord should be saved. This promise relates to the times of the Gospel; and was fulfilled when our Lord sent the Holy Ghost upon his apostles, after his ascension into heaven; as St. *Peter* shows in the second chapter of the *Acts;* and this promise is executed in behalf of all the faithful who live under the new covenant, since God pours his Holy Spirit into their hearts, and gives salvation to all such as call upon his name; which should lead us to celebrate the divine mercy towards us, and to make a due improvement of all the spiritual blessings which he so plentifully bestows upon us in his church.

CHAPTER III.

Joel foretells, that God would bring the *Jews* again after their captivity into their own country; that he would take vengeance upon their enemies for their cruelty and injustice towards them, would deliver his people, and bless them abundantly.

Reflections.

The promises contained in this chapter, whereby God had engaged to bring again the captive *Jews* into their own country, and to punish the idolatrous nations who had afflicted them, were fulfilled, when the *Jews* returned from their captivity at *Babylon;* and the *Edomites*, *Egyptians*, and *Babylonians*, who had so greatly afflicted the people of God, felt the divine vengeance. We here see, that God is faithful to his promises, and that his covenant with his people standeth sure; that when he appears most angry with them, he still preserves his love and kind-

ness towards them. Lastly, We here observe the care God takes in preserving, protecting, and defending his church, against the power and malice of its enemies. These promises are likewise applicable to the Christian church in a sense still more perfect; and it is in this light that we are to consider them, and to meditate upon them for our edification and comfort.

The End of the Book of the Prophet Joel.

THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET

A M O S.

ARGUMENT.

God sent the prophet Amos, who was a shepherd, to exhort the Jews of Israel and Judah to repentance; to denounce his judgments against them; and at the same time to foretell the deliverance of the people of God, and the coming of Jesus Christ. The time in which Amos prophesied is noted at the beginning of his Book.

CHAPTER I.

God says, that he was going to punish the *Syrians*, *Philistines*, *Tyrians*, *Edomites*, *Moabites*, and *Ammonites*, because of their crimes, and the evils they had done to the *Jews*.

Reflections after reading the Chapter.

On this chapter we are to consider, that all the people here mentioned felt the effects of the threatenings denounced against them by *Amos* and the other prophets; and that God punished them, by means of the *Assyrians*, for their pride and injustice, and the cruelties they had exercised against the *Jews*, whereby we see, that God is just and true in

his threatenings, and revenges the injuries done to the innocent, and especially to his church.

CHAPTER II.

I. *Amos* denounces the ruin of the *Moabites.* II. He declares next, that the people of *Judah* and of *Israel* should be likewise punished, because they had forsaken the service and laws of the Lord, and rendered themselves guilty of foul ingratitude; and because, although God had raised prophets among them, to warn them, they had refused to hearken to them.

Reflections.

THE threatenings contained in this chapter engage us to consider, that God, after he had declared that he would execute his judgments upon the nations round about the *Jews*, says, he would likewise punish the kingdoms of *Judah* and *Israel* for their sins, because they had sinned against God, forsaken his service, abused his favours, and refused to hearken to the prophets, whom he had at several times raised up among them. God punishes sin everywhere, and particularly in those on whom he has conferred extraordinary favours, when they make ungrateful returns for his mercies, break his laws, and cast his word behind them, and despise the warnings of his servants.

CHAPTER III.

I. *Amos* denounces the dreadful judgments of God against the *Israelites*, and declares, that God was going to execute his threatenings upon them, according to the predictions of the prophet. II. He calls the *Philistines* and *Egyptians* to be witnesses of the sins of the *Israelites*, and of the vengeance God would take upon them: and he foretells, that the cities and palaces of the *Israelites* should be overthrown, and that *Beth-el*, which was the place where they worshipped the idols, should be totally destroyed.

Reflections.

I. GOD's severe treatment of the *Jews*, whom he had chosen above all the people of the earth, but they had rebelled against him, teaches us, that those whom God has received into covenant, and has distinguished by his favours, are most severely punished when they prove unfaithful. II. *Amos* teaches us, that when God speaks and threatens, all the world ought to stand in awe; and that no evil happens to men but what proceeds from God. This ought to fill us with a salutary dread of the voice of God and his threatenings; and make us confess, that all the evils, and all the calamities which come upon men, are the dispensations of Providence; and that we ought to adore in all things the justice of God, and to submit to his will. III. When we read, that God calls the neighbouring people to bear witness to the great disorders that reigned among the *Jews*, and to see the vengeance that he was going to take upon them; this shows to what a height of corruption they were arrived, insomuch that the idolatrous nations themselves had reason to be astonished, and to acknowledge the justice of God's judgments upon them. IV. The same justice appeared, in that *Beth-el*, which was the place where their idolatry was established, and the palaces and houses of the great men, in which they had committed their crimes, were devoted to utter destruction.

CHAPTER IV.

I. THE prophet foretells, that the Lord would quickly destroy *Samaria*, the capital of the ten tribes, because of the wickedness, injustice, and violence, which the great men, who are here called the fat kine of *Basan*, committed in it, and because of the idolatry that was established at *Beth-el*, and at *Gilgal*. II. He next reproaches the *Jews*, that notwithstanding God had chastened them by famine, drought, vermin, pestilence, and other scourges, yet they were not converted to him; and therefore, that they must prepare

themselves to feel the utmost effects of his wrath and indignation.

Reflections.

THERE are two reflections to be made on this chapter. I. That there are two sins which particularly provoke God to anger against a nation; which are, the injustice and oppression committed by great men; and the profanation of divine service, and the false worship paid to God. The other thing we are to learn here is, that God uses to call men to conversion by divers corrections, before he suffers his severest judgments to fall upon them. He had sent famine, drought, burnings, vermin, pestilence, and war, upon the *Israelites*, to bring them to himself; but because they did not sincerely turn to God when he smote them with all these scourges, he at last made use of the most dreadful and severe chastisements, delivering them to their enemies, and driving them out of their own country.

CHAPTER V.

I. *Amos* foretells and declares the desolation of the ten tribes, and attributes that desolation to the idolatry, oppression, injustice, and other crimes of that nation; but particularly to their continuing in the idolatrous worship practised at *Beth-el, Gilgal, and Beersheba.* II. He describes the miseries that were to fall upon their cities and the whole country. III. He tells them, that God abhorred their feasts, their solemn assemblies, their burnt sacrifices, and their whole worship; because they served idols, as their fathers had done in the wilderness: and that to punish them for their idolatry, they would soon be carried captives into *Assyria*, beyond *Damascus.*

Reflections.

GOD continues in this chapter to reprove the *Israelites* for their two principal sins; namely, that they were idolaters, and that the great men among them had no sense of religion and conscience, but op-

pressed the innocent, committed injustice, and took rewards and bribes. These reproaches, which so frequently occur in the Prophets, show very plainly, that those sins are of the number of the great crimes that God suffers not to pass unpunished, and which even occasion the ruin of kings and nations. II. It appears from hence, that God, at the time he so severely threatened the *Israelites*, was so gracious as to inform them how they might prevent their destruction, by forbidding them to go to *Beth-el* and other places where they served idols; telling them several times: *Seek the Lord, and ye shall live. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate; it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto you.* God is infinitely good, and long-suffering towards sinners, and does not punish them as they deserve, till he has showed them the way to escape his judgments. III. We have seen, that the sacrifices, and all the worship of the *Jews* were displeasing to God; that he *hated their feast days, and their solemn assemblies, and would not accept their burnt-offerings.* God thereby declares, that all outward acts of religious worship, even those which are attended with the greatest solemnity, are looked upon by him as sacrilege and impiety, when those who perform them trample under foot his holy laws, and have no real intention to please him, and to do his will.

CHAPTER VI.

I. THE rebukes and threatenings in this chapter are chiefly addressed to the rich and great men of the kingdom of *Judah* and *Israel*. II. *Amos* reproves them for their injustice, dissoluteness, sensual lives, and pride; and he blames them, above all, that at a time when they should afflict themselves for the desolation of *Joseph*, that is to say, of a part of their brethren; and when they themselves were threatened with the like treatment, they abandoned themselves to mirth and pleasure. III. He gives them to un-

derstand, that God, being justly provoked, would humble their pride, cause both great and small to perish in a miserable manner, and take from them all those advantages which they abused, and deliver them into the hands of the *Assyrians*.

Reflections.

We are chiefly to observe, in the reading of this chapter, that among the several sins which displease God, and provoke his indignation, there are three which particularly produce this effect; which are, I. The injustice and violence committed by the rich and great. II. A sensual and voluptuous life, luxury, high living, the love of pleasure and diversions, and pride. III. Insensibility under God's corrections, and the examples of his wrath. These were the sins for which the *Jews* perished, and which bring down his vengeance upon such as are guilty of them; wherefore we ought most carefully to avoid them. To this end let us consider, that these sins do not only expose men to temporal punishment, but make them subject still more unavoidably to the punishments of the world to come; and that injustice, a love of pleasures, impatience, and security, are yet more displeasing to God in Christians, than they were in the *Jews;* because the Gospel does so expressly command, and by the most powerful motives engage us, to renounce the desires of the flesh, and to live in charity, temperance, and humility.

CHAPTER VII.

This chapter has two parts. In the first, *Amos* relates three visions: the two first, which are the vision of the grasshoppers, and that of the fire, represent the corrections wherewith God had intended to visit the *Israelites;* and from which they had been delivered by the intercession of the prophet, and by the goodness and long-suffering of God towards them. The third vision, which was that of a man with a plumb-line in his hand, denoted, that God was just going to put his threatenings in execution against that people; that

he would not bear with them any longer, and in particular, would destroy the house of *Jeroboam*. In the second part of this chapter, *Amos* relates that *Amaziah*, who was an idolatrous priest of *Beth-el*, accused him to *Jeroboam*, the king of *Israel*, of conspiring against him; and would have forced the prophet to fly into the land of *Judah*, and to prophesy no more at *Beth-el*. But *Amos* repeated his predictions, and threatens *Amaziah* and his family with a fatal end, and says, that the *Israelites* should certainly be carried out of their country.

Reflections.

THE visions related in the first part of this chapter show, that before God cast off the *Jews*, he had chastened them several ways, and bore with them a long time, being moved by the intercession of the prophet; but seeing that their hardness of heart was unconquerable, he was resolved to spare them no longer. God in his goodness and patience does not presently destroy those who sin against him; he hearkens unto the intercession of good men, and warns and corrects them; but when sinners despise God's long-suffering, he displays on them the utmost severity of his justice, from which nothing can secure them. In the second part we see, how an idolatrous priest accused *Amos* of having conspired against the king, and would have had him leave the land of *Israel;* but the prophet continued always speaking in God's name, and declared to that ungodly priest, that he should see the shame and destruction of his family, and should be carried with the *Israelites* into a strange land. This is an example to show that the innocent, and the true servants of God, have in all ages been exposed to calumny, and the contradiction of sinners; that the fear of men ought not to discourage them, nor hinder them from discharging their duty; and that those who resist the word of God, and his faithful ministers, as they oppose God himself, shall never escape unpunished.

CHAPTER VIII.

I. The Lord represents the ruin of the kingdom of *Israel*, by the vision of a basket of summer fruits, which were ripe and fit to eat. II. He blames those that enrich themselves by covetousness, extortion, injustice, and by oppressing the people. Lastly, He declares, that God would not suffer these crimes to pass unpunished; that he would overwhelm the land of *Israel* with all kinds of calamities; and chiefly, that he would send the famine of his word to punish the *Israelites* for their contempt of it, and for the idolatry they committed in worshipping the golden calves of *Dan* and *Beersheba*.

Reflections.

Besides the general reflections we may make upon the punishments the *Israelites* drew upon themselves by their idolatry, and by their other sins, this chapter offers us two particular considerations, which we ought carefully to attend to. One is, that it is a very great and crying sin to make use of fraud, extortion, and oppression, to gain wealth; to have false weights and false measures; and especially to shut up and engross corn, and other things necessary for life, in the time of famine, with a design to enrich ourselves, and by that means get the substance of the poor and necessitous. It is very remarkable, that God swears by himself that he will not suffer such sins to go unpunished. The other consideration relates to the threatening of the prophet, that God would *send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord.* Let us learn from hence, that the most terrible chastisement God can inflict upon a people is to deprive them of his word, and no longer to send his faithful servants amongst them; and therefore, that those who enjoy those precious advantages ought to esteem them above all things, and make a good use of them, lest God deprive them of them.

CHAPTER IX.

I. *Amos* relates a new vision, in which he saw God standing upon the altar, and commanding that place to be destroyed, with all the people; and declaring, that his vengeance would pursue the *Jews* wherever they went; and that he would no longer look upon them as his people. II. He promises, nevertheless, that after he had dispersed them, he would recall them one day, and would restore the tabernacle, that is to say, the throne of *David*, and the true worship of God; and with this promise *Amos* ends his prophecy.

Reflections.

In this chapter we see God's severe justice against the *Jews*, and his mercy towards the remnant of that nation. The severity of God's justice appears in the order he gave an angel to destroy the *Jews;* and especially in his declaring, that though they should hide themselves in the bottom of the earth or sea, or should ascend up even to the heavens, his vengeance should pursue them thither, since he is the great and mighty God, the creator and governor of the world. These words, so full of majesty, should inspire us with fear and reverence, and convince us that God is everywhere, that his power has no bounds, and that nothing can screen the wicked from his justice and vengeance. The mercy of God shows itself in his declaring, that the *Jews* should not be cast off for ever; that he would have compassion on them, and bring them again from their captivity; that he would raise up the tabernacle of *David;* and that then all the nations should call upon the name of the Lord. This prophecy does not only signify that the *Jews* should return into their own land after the captivity; it relates also to the glorious establishment of the kingdom of the Messiah, and the calling of the Gentiles, as St. *James* explains it in the fifteenth chapter of the *Acts*, where he quotes these words, *After this I will return*,

and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down. And I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up. That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doth all these things.

The End of the Book of the Prophet Amos.

THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET OBADIAH.

ARGUMENT.

The Book of Obadiah is a prophecy against the Edomites, who were neighbours of the Jews, and descended from Esau, Jacob's brother: for which reason the prophet says, that the Jews were their brethren. Obadiah foretells, that God would root out the Edomites because of their pride, and particularly because they rejoiced at the ruin of the Jews, and had even helped to destroy them; which might incline us to believe, that he lived after the destruction of Jerusalem: But as Joel, chap. iii. 19, *and Amos, chap.* i. 11, 12, *reprove and threaten the Edomites in the same manner; and the prophecy of Obadiah is placed immediately after that of Joel and Amos, we must suppose that these three prophets lived at the same time; and that what is said in this book of the miseries that had befallen the Jews, relates to some other calamities which they had been exposed to; as we read 2 Chron.* xxi. 16, 17, *and* xxv. 21. *Obadiah foretells likewise, that the Jews should return into their own land, and even possess part of the country of the Edomites.*

Reflections after reading the Chapter.

THE prophecy of *Obadiah* has this peculiarity in it, that he prophesied not against the *Jews*, but against another nation, even against the *Edomites*. Two things are to be considered in this Book. The first is, that the ruin of the *Edomites* happened as *Obadiah* and the other prophets had foretold; for the *Chaldeans* took and destroyed *Edom* soon after *Jerusalem* was taken; and when the *Jews* were returned into their own land, they gained great advantages over the *Edomites*, and became masters of a part of their country. These events, which so exactly answer the predictions of *Obadiah*, prove the Divine authority of his prophecy. The second reflection relates to the cause of their destruction. The prophet several times declares, that they were thus treated on account of their pride, their vain confidence, and particularly because they had rejoiced to see the miseries of the *Jews*, their neighbours and brethren: and had even helped to destroy them; killing those who had escaped the rage of the *Babylonians*, when *Jerusalem* was taken. Thus Providence brings down proud and cruel people, severely punishes those who insult the miserable, and delight in their sufferings, and takes vengeance on the enemies of the church, and those who oppose his glory.

The End of the Book of the Prophet Obadiah.

THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET

JONAH.

ARGUMENT.

Jonah lived in the time of Jeroboam the second, king of Israel. He was sent from God to Nineveh, the capital of the empire of the Assyrians, to denounce the ruin of that city; and this Book informs us what was the success of his ministry. Jonah uttered other prophecies besides that contained in this Book: as may be concluded from the fourteenth chapter of the Second Book of Kings. Jonah is the only prophet, whose writings are handed down to us, that was sent to any strange nation. What our Lord says in the Gospel, confirms the truth of what is contained in this Book, and shows that Jonah was a prophet sent from God.

CHAPTER I.

I. God sends *Jonah* to *Nineveh;* but the prophet being afraid to go thither, embarks to go to *Tarshish.* II. God raises a great tempest, and *Jonah* is cast into the sea to allay the storm.

Reflections after reading the Chapter.

It may be observed in general upon the Book of *Jonah,* that God sent that prophet to the *Ninevites,* and to the *Assyrians,* that those idolaters and enemies

of the *Jews*, who were in a short time to destroy the kingdom of the ten tribes, might know that the God of *Israel* was the Almighty God, who would overthrow their city, as it happened some time after. The particular reflections to be made on this chapter are three: I. That *Jonah* fearing to go to discharge his commission at *Nineveh*, attempted to fly into a distant country. This was the effect of the prophet's weakness, which, upon this occasion, got the better of his piety. They who have not courage to obey the divine call, are guilty of a sin like that of *Jonah*: but this the ministers of God are particularly guilty of, who, through shame or the fear of men, dare not speak to them in his name. II. The storm which suddenly came upon *Jonah*, and those that sailed with him, and which God sent, teaches us, that it is in vain to think of escaping his knowledge, or flying from his authority; since he pursues and finds out those that refuse to obey him, who, whoever they are, cannot escape his justice. III. We must observe, that *Jonah* was discovered by lot, cast into the sea, and swallowed by a fish. By this means God was pleased to punish the prophet for his disobedience, make him sensible of the greatness of his crime, and engage him to confess it before those who were with him in the ship, and to repair it afterwards by going to *Nineveh*. Thus God proposed to inspire those idolaters with fear that were with *Jonah*, and lead them to revere and proclaim the power of that God whose minister *Jonah* was, which accordingly they did when the storm ceased. What happened on this occasion shows likewise, that the lot, as well as all other events, are at the disposal of Divine Providence.

CHAPTER II.

Jonah being cast into the sea, is swallowed by a great fish, in whose belly he remained three days and three nights. He prays to God, and thanks him for delivering him, and the fish casts him upon the shore.

Reflections.

I. The manner in which God preserved *Jonah*, causing him to be swallowed by a great fish, when he was cast into the sea, is a new miracle, which discovers the power of God, at the same time that it displays his goodness towards the prophet. Thus God shows his mercy, at the same time he is giving proofs of his justice: and when he chastises he designs to preserve and bless. II. *Jonah's* prayer to God, when he had brought him up from the depth of the sea, and when the fish which had swallowed him up was going to cast him upon the shore, shows the great faith and thankfulness of the prophet, as well as his return to his duty. III. The deliverance of *Jonah*, when he came out of the belly of the fish, is another wonderful event, which displays in an illustrious manner the power and goodness of God. But what we are chiefly to take notice of in this event is, that the miraculous manner in which God restored *Jonah* to life the third day, was a very express type of the death and resurrection of our Lord. This *Jesus Christ* himself teaches us in the Gospel, where he says, *That as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so the Son of Man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, and on the third day he shall rise again.*

CHAPTER III.

Jonah being sent a second time to *Nineveh*, declares to the people of that great city, that it was going to be destroyed; at which the king and the inhabitants being moved, fasted and humbled themselves before God, which prevailed upon him to spare them.

Reflections.

This history presents us with the following reflections: I. That *Jonah*, who was afraid to go to *Nineveh* the first time the Lord sent him, after he had

felt the effects of God's power, went thither boldly. This example shows, that the Divine corrections are of great use, as they serve to recover men from their errors, awaken the zeal of good men, and lead them to a more faithful discharge of their duty. II. God commanded *Jonah* to go to *Nineveh*, and threaten the inhabitants of that great city, which was sunk in idolatry, luxury, and dissoluteness, with a speedy and total destruction. The warning God gave the *Ninevites* of their approaching ruin, is a proof on one hand, that he was provoked at the abominable crimes they were addicted to; and on the other, it is a token of his mercy towards that people. Thus the sins of men, and particularly those committed in great cities and the courts of princes, provoke God's wrath and indignation; and yet God, in his mercy, threatens men before he punishes them, that they may prevent his judgments by repentance. III. The king of *Nineveh* and his people, who had been informed of the miracle that had happened in the person of *Jonah*, humbled themselves, and forsook their sins, and God was reconciled towards them. This teaches us that fasting, humiliation, and conversion, are most effectual means of averting the Divine anger; and that God, who is infinitely gracious, forgives the most guilty, when they forsake their sins. Lastly, This history should call to mind what our Lord says in the Gospel upon this occasion; *The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment against this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold a greater than Jonah is here.* By this we may judge that Christians who are called to repentance by the voice of *Jesus Christ* himself, shall certainly be condemned, if they refuse to hear the call.

CHAPTER IV.

Jonah, seeing God had spared the *Ninevites*, is grieved, and wishes for death; but God, to convince him how unreasonable it was to grieve as he did,

caused a plant to wither, under which the prophet was sheltered.

Reflections.

I. The displeasure of the prophet at God's sparing the *Ninevites*, must be considered as one of those weaknesses which are sometimes found in persons of true piety, and which God graciously pardons. However, his displeasure proceeds from a fear of being exposed to some ill treatment in that country and passing for a false prophet, since his threatenings had not been executed. II. It is to be observed that God caused the plant to wither under whose shade *Jonah* sat, and when the prophet grieved at it, he showed him how unreasonable it was to be so much concerned and afraid, because God had spared *Nineveh*. What God said to *Jonah* on this occasion expresses his great goodness towards this prophet, and especially his great mercy towards all men, which was extended even to little children. The all-gracious God hates none of his creatures; and, far from making them miserable, and taking pleasure in their sufferings, he is inclined to spare them, and do them good. This mercy of God ought to affect our hearts with love and gratitude towards him, inspire us with sentiments of love towards all men, and engage us to be *merciful, as our Father which is in heaven, is merciful.*

The End of the Book of the Prophet Jonah.

THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET MICAH.

ARGUMENT.

Micah lived in the time of Isaiah and Hosea. The design of his prophecy is, to reprove the Jews for their sins, both those of the kingdom of Israel, and chiefly those of Judah; to denounce their ruin, and to foretell the restoration of the people of God, and the coming of the Messiah.

CHAPTER I.

I. THE prophet says, that God was preparing to destroy *Samaria*, the capital of the kingdom of *Israel*, and *Jerusalem*, the capital of *Judah*, because these two kingdoms had given themselves up to idolatry. II. He foretells likewise the ruin of several cities in the land of *Israel* and *Judah*, such as *Saphir*, *Zaanin*, *Maroth*, *Lachish*, and some others.

Reflections after reading the Chapter.

I. WE are to consider in general, on this first chapter, that the event proved the truth and divinity of this prophecy; the kingdom of *Israel* having been destroyed by the *Assyrians*, and that of *Judah*, after it

had been attacked by the same *Assyrians* in the reign of *Hezekiah*, being at last destroyed by the *Babylonians*, and the people led away into captivity. II. We should take particular notice of that pompous description of the majesty and power of the Lord, which the prophet gives at the beginning of this Book. It teaches us, that God is a being of unbounded power, that nothing can resist him, and that, as he employs this power to protect such as fear him, so likewise he makes use of it to punish them that offend him. This we have an example of in the destruction of the chief cities of *Israel* and *Judah*, and even of these two whole kingdoms; who, for having provoked God to wrath by their idolatry, and by divers crimes, found themselves at last deprived of his protection, and delivered into the hands of their enemies.

CHAPTER II.

Micah, after he had in the former chapter described the idolatry of the *Jews*, in this complains of the injustice and extortion committed among them, principally by their great men and rulers, and threatens them with sudden destruction.

Reflections.

I. THE prophet complains in this chapter, that the *Jews*, and particularly their rulers, were covetous and unjust, and had no other design but to enrich themselves, and made use of every means to this end. Moreover, he accuses them of attempting to hinder the prophets of the Lord from speaking to them, and for hearkening rather to false prophets. Lastly, He protests, that God would soon make them feel the effects of his justice, by driving them out of the land wherein they dwelt. By this all men may see, that the sins of persons in authority, their injustice, violence, desire of enriching themselves, and contempt of God's warnings by his word and ministers, is a mark of extreme corruption, and that God will one

way or other take vengeance on those sins, when men obstinately persist in them.

CHAPTER III.

THE prophet goes on in censuring the *Jews* for their sins. I. He reproaches the magistrates for their avarice, injustice, and other misdemeanors. II. He speaks against the false prophets, who deceived the *Jews*, promising them peace, in hopes thereby of promoting their own interest. III. He declares, in the name of the Lord, that these sins of the rulers of the people would cause God quickly to overthrow *Jerusalem*, and the temple, and reduce them to a ruinous heap.

Reflections.

THE censures contained in this chapter are addressed to the princes, and magistrates, and prophets of *Israel*. They show, that the depravity of the *Jews* was general, and past remedy, in the time of the prophet *Micah;* but that the source of the corruption was in those who were at the head of the nation. The judges and magistrates openly practised injustice, judged for rewards, and took bribes. Besides, the prophets and priests, who would have opposed the corruption, were prevaricators and mercenary, who, by flattering the people, lulled them in their security. These are the crimes for which the prophets very frequently reproached the *Jewish* princes, and for which *Micah* declares, that *Sion* and *Jerusalem* should be made an heap of stones. By this every one may see to what degree the crimes of persons in a public character, as unrighteousness in judgment, and infidelity in the ministers of religion, provoke the Lord, and the great evils they bring upon the whole nation. This is what judges and magistrates, as well as pastors, should continually and seriously consider. The ministers of God, in particular, ought to imitate the holy confidence of *Micah*, and be, like him, filled with the Spirit of God, to tell *Jacob his trespass, and Israel his sin;*

that is, to rebuke vice with great freedom in all persons, and to declare to men all that God has commanded them to say in his name; taking heed above all things not to lull sinners, by giving them false hopes, or concealing the miseries that threaten them.

CHAPTER IV.

THE prophet foretells: I. That all nations should be called to the knowledge of the true God. II. That though the *Jews* were to go into captivity at *Babylon*, God would give them peace, and victory over their enemies.

Reflections.

THIS chapter contains two prophecies: the first foretells that all nations should be enlightened with the knowledge of the true God, and should come and worship and serve him. The state of religion, and the divine worship at *Jerusalem*, after the return of the *Jews* from the *Babylonish* captivity, does not fully answer the majesty of this prophecy. But we have seen the accomplishment of it in the calling of the Gentiles, and their conversion to Christianity. This great and happy event should convince us of the truth of the Christian Religion, and the divinity of the prophecies which went before concerning it, and produce in us great gratitude towards God, and fervent zeal for his service. *Micah's* second prediction shows, that the *Jews* should be carried captives to *Babylon*, but that they should return, and dwell in *Judea*, and that all their enemies should be confounded. This prophecy was fulfilled as well as the former, which should serve to confirm us still more in the faith. We here likewise have an evident proof of the goodness of God, and his love to his people; since while he threatens the *Jews* to send them to *Babylon*, and deliver them to strange nations, he promises to bring them again to their own land, and to make them triumph over all their enemies.

CHAPTER V.

THE predictions in this chapter describe, I. The wars that would be in *Judea*, the siege of *Jerusalem*, the fall of the *Jewish* government, the coming of the Messiah, who was to be born at *Bethlehem*, and the establishing of his kingdom. II *Micah* foretells, that the *Israelites* should be delivered from the *Assyrians* and *Babylonians*, who were to be given into the hands of their enemies, and utterly destroyed.

Reflections.

THIS chapter contains several predictions, which have all been verified by the event. We here see the miseries which afflicted the *Jews* before the coming of our Lord: but, above all, we here meet with an express prophecy, foretelling that the Messiah should come out of the town of *Bethlehem*. This prophecy perfectly agrees with *Jesus Christ*, as St. *Matthew* remarks in the second chapter of his Gospel, and can be applied to no other. The other predictions of the prophet have likewise been fulfilled. The *Jews* were delivered and protected by kings raised up by God to that end, and returned into *Judea*; the *Assyrian* and *Babylonian* empires came to an end, and *Babylon* was utterly destroyed. So that the divinity of the prophecies, and the truth of God's promises, cannot be called in question, any more than the truth of religion in general, and our obligation to practise the duties it prescribes.

CHAPTER VI.

I. THE Lord complains, after a very earnest and affecting manner, of the ingratitude of the *Jews*, who notwithstanding his favours at all times bestowed upon them, rebelled against him, and forsook him. II. He tells them, that their sacrifices and oblations were not able to turn away his wrath; and that the only way

to become acceptable to him, was to do what was right. Lastly, He reproaches them for the injustice, deceit, and violence, which were committed among them. But he especially accuses them of keeping the statutes of *Omri* and *Ahab;* that is, of following the idolatrous worship which those kings had introduced in the kingdom of the ten tribes; and he declares that the Lord, provoked by all these crimes, would overtake them with his judgments.

Reflections.

FROM this chapter we learn, I. That God is perfectly just, and at the same time full of goodness towards men; that he only seeks to make them happy; and that he loads them with his favours to engage them to love and fear him. This *Micah* expresses in most affecting terms, when he says, that God pleads with his people, and asks them, *O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee; testify against me.* These words show, in the clearest manner, that men are guilty of foul ingratitude when they rebel against a good and gracious God; and that if they thereby bring down his wrath upon them, they are without excuse. II. The next instruction is, *That it is not with sacrifices and burnt offerings, or oblations, that God will be pleased; but that he has showed us what is good; and what the Lord requires of us, even to do justly, aud to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.* By these words God teaches us, that the only worship he receives is that which is attended with uprightness, and innocence of life, with charity and humility of heart. These are the essential duties of religion; for the neglect of which the *Jews*, who were otherwise careful enough in the practice of the ceremonies and external duties of Divine worship, perished in a miserable manner. Lastly, Since God declares, he will not justify the unjust, those who make use of false weights, and false measures, and rob their neigh-

bour, either by violence, or by fraud and deceit; we cannot at all doubt but these sins are very odious in his sight, and will bring down the curse of God upon such as are guilty of them.

CHAPTER VII.

THIS chapter contains two things: I. *Micah* laments the extreme corruption of the *Jews*, and the vices that reigned among them. II. He promises them a happy restoration, and assures them, that, after God had delivered them, for some time, into the hand of their enemies, and had justly chastised them, he would give them peace again, and would do for them such wonderful things as he had done in the times of their forefathers; for which the prophet blesses and praises the Lord.

Reflections.

HERE we may observe three things for our edification; which are, the complaints of the prophet, his comforting the *Jews*, and his thanksgivings to God. I. He complains of the strange depravity of the *Jews*, saying that one could not find a good man among them; that they sought nothing but to do mischief to one another; that sincere people were so scarce among them, that they could not trust their nearest relations; that magistrates and judges ran after bribes, and were guilty of all kinds of iniquity. This picture of the strange corruption of the *Jews*, shows the justice of those punishments with which God visited them; and we may observe from thence, that when the fear of God, uprightness and sincerity are banished out of a country, when deceit and fraud prevail, and judges take bribes and rewards, the judgments of God will soon unavoidably fall upon the land for such abominations. II. We must take good heed to those words wherewith *Micah* comforted the people of God, when they were quickly to fall into the hands of their enemies: *Rejoice not against me,*

O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise: when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me. These admirable words teach us God's way of dealing with men, and in particular with his church, when they sin against him. He chastens them, but does not forsake them, nor suffer their enemies to prevail against them. III. This conduct of the Lord should stir us up to acknowledge and praise his power, wisdom, and goodness; and to say with the prophet, *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy; he will have compassion upon us, and will forgive our iniquities.*

The End of the Book of the Prophet Micah.

THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET NAHUM.

ARGUMENT.

The prophecy of Nahum is a prediction of the destruction of Nineveh, and the end of the empire of the Assyrians. It is thought Nahum lived about eighty years after Jonah, who had also prophesied against the Ninevites.

CHAPTER I.

NAHUM gives a noble description of the majesty and power of God, to show that the *Assyrians* could not resist him, and that, notwithstanding their strength, they should be destroyed, whilst the *Jews*, whom they had used so ill, should be restored and preserved.

Reflections after reading the Chapter.

I. It must be observed upon this book of *Nahum*, that God raised several prophets, not only to foretell the destruction of the *Jews*, but likewise that of other nations, and particularly of the *Assyrians*, whose empire was exceedingly powerful, and who had greatly oppressed the people of God; their kings, *Pul*, *Tiglathpileser*, *Salmaneser*, and *Sennacherib*, having

come, at several different times, into the land of *Israel*, and made great havoc there. These predictions must have comforted the *Jews*, and convinced them, and the idolatrous nations themselves, that it was the Almighty God, and the Lord of the world, who permitted these nations to injure and oppress his people, and who spake by the mouth of his prophets. II. It is necessary to observe, in the next place, that *Jonah* having been sent to *Nineveh* about eighty years before, the *Ninevites* had then averted the wrath of God by their repentance; but that afterwards returning to their iniquities, and oppressing the *Jews*, *Nahum* was sent to foretell the destruction of their city, and of the whole *Assyrian* monarchy. God pardons men upon their humiliation, and bears with them; but when they return to their iniquities, he at last executes the decrees of his justice. III. We must know, that the predictions of *Nahum*, made at a time when the *Assyrians* were still very powerful and formidable, were entirely fulfilled at the end of about ninety years, when *Nabopolassar*, father to the great *Nebuchadnezzar*, king of *Babylon*, destroyed *Nineveh*, and put an end to the *Assyrian* empire; which is a strong proof of the divinity of this Book. Lastly, What *Nahum* says at the beginning of this Book, with so much strength and elegance, concerning the infinite power and justice of God, teaches us, that since God is so great and powerful, those who offend him cannot resist him; and that nothing can hurt those who fear him, and put their trust in him.

CHAPTER II.

THE prophet foretells, that the city of *Nineveh*, and the *Assyrian* monarchy, of which *Nineveh* was the capital, should be assaulted by powerful enemies, and that notwithstanding its strength, it should be taken, plundered, and laid entirely desolate. This desolation is here represented in a figurative and prophetical manner.

Reflections.

In this chapter we meet with a description of what befell the *Assyrians*, and the city of *Nineveh*, some time after this prophecy. This ancient, powerful, and opulent city, was taken by the *Babylonians*, its houses and palaces were destroyed, its inhabitants became a prey to the conquerors, and the *Assyrian* monarchy came to an end. So considerable an event should convince us more and more, that the predictions of the prophets came from God; that there is a providence presiding over all things with justice and wisdom, and with a power which nothing can resist; and that the same God, who thus punishes and abases kingdoms and nations, is the judge of all men, and will render to every one according to his works.

CHAPTER III.

Nahum continues to foretell the destruction of *Nineveh*, which he calls the city of blood, on account of the cruelties practised in it. He says, that that powerful and magnificent city should be plundered and sacked, because it was full of pride and injustice, and defiled with its adulteries, that is, by the idolatry that prevailed in it; to this he adds, that as *No*, which was a populous city in *Egypt*, (and which is supposed to be the famous city of *Thebes*) was destroyed by *Sennacherib*, so should *Nineveh* be destroyed; and that neither the riches, nor the mighty men, nor all the people in it, however numerous, should be able to secure it; and that it should never recover from its ruins.

Reflections.

In the destruction of *Nineveh*, and of the *Assyrian* monarchy, which was one of the most ancient and most flourishing empires in the world, we must observe the almighty power of God, who when he pleases overturns the greatest states. Besides God's infinite power, we may here also consider his justice; since it was the pride of the *Assyrians*, their luxury, injustice,

idolatry, and the evil they had done the *Israelites*, that induced God to destroy them. Thus it will always be; God will ever humble the proud, and punish those that live in wickedness and impiety; especially when they obstinately persist in their sins. Lastly, It must be considered, that God caused the destruction of *Nineveh* to be foretold long beforehand by *Nahum*, for the consolation of his people, who were to be afflicted and invaded by the kings of *Assyria*. He did it likewise to prevent these idolatrous nations from glorifying in their victories over the *Jews;* and that the whole world might see, that if the *Jews* were vanquished, it was by the will and permission of God, who meant to chastise his people by means of the *Assyrians*.

The End of the Book of the Prophet Nahum.

THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET

HABAKKUK.

ARGUMENT.

Habakkuk prophesied a little before the taking of Jerusalem, and near the time of Jeremiah. He foretold, that God, being provoked by the sins of his people, was about to deliver them to the Chaldeans their enemies; and that afterwards, the Chaldeans also should feel the effects of the Divine vengeance.

CHAPTER I.

In the first chapter *Habakkuk* does three things: I. He complains, that the corruption of the *Jews* was come to its height. II. He says, that God would bring the *Chaldeans* upon them to destroy them. III. He prays God not to forsake his people, to avenge the injuries they received, and not to suffer their enemies to triumph over them, nor to ascribe their victories to their own strength, and to their idols.

Reflections after reading the Chapter.

The reflections to be made upon the three parts of this chapter are these: I. The first relates to the state of the *Jews* before their destruction. The complaints with which *Habakkuk* begins his prophecy, show, that

nothing but violence and injustice was to be found among them; the law was no longer of any force to restrain them, justice was trampled under foot, and all kinds of iniquity were committed by them. This was the true cause of the evils that came upon them; and thus does God usually punish those who give themselves up to wickedness and impiety. II. In the description the prophet gives of the coming of the *Chaldeans*, of their cruelty, and of the waste they would make in *Judea*, we ought to consider, not so much the power of the *Chaldeans*, as the justice of God, who made use of them to punish the *Jews*. III. *Habakkuk's* prayer to God, imploring his assistance against the impiety and pride of the king of the *Chaldeans*, who boasted of his victories, and attributed them to his false gods, teaches us to have recourse to God in all dangers and necessities; and to do this with extraordinary zeal and confidence, when God's glory is concerned. This prayer should moreover convince us, that God is righteous; that his eyes are too pure to behold iniquity; that he cannot suffer injustice and violence; and that he is engaged by his own glory to confound the proud, and all who haughtily exalt themselves against him.

CHAPTER II.

THE prophet having prayed, in the foregoing chapter, for the *Jews*, God answers him in this, and assures him, that although the deliverance of his people, and the punishment of the *Babylonians*, were delayed for awhile, yet both of them should infallibly come to pass; that he would punish the *Babylonians* for their cruelties and dissoluteness, and, above all, for their impiety and idolatry; that he would make them know, that it was in vain they trusted in their false gods.

Reflections.

FROM the reading of this chapter we may learn, I. To wait with patience, faith, and firm confidence, the accomplishment of God's promises, and not to be dis-

couraged when he defers the execution of them. This is the instruction which the prophet gives us, when he says, *Though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry:* And *the just shall live by faith.* II. The prophet teaches us, that the *Babylonians* would infallibly be destroyed for their pride, injustice, rapine, and idolatry. Thus we learn, that the end of God's judgments is to punish men for the crimes they commit, and to show that he is the supreme Lord and judge over all the earth. Further, These threatenings of *Habakkuk* were executed; the *Babylonians* felt the Divine vengeance as the *Assyrians* had done before them: and by this means, those two formidable powers, who had treated the *Jews* with so great cruelty, became examples of the Divine vengeance in the sight of all men. Lastly, What the prophet says of the punishment God would inflict upon the king of *Babylon* for his injustice and violence, is applicable to all such as propose to enrich and raise themselves by sinful methods. Wherefore we ought to consider these words of *Habakkuk* with great attention: *Wo unto him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house,* and what follows on this subject. This curse does not less regard private persons than kings; it threatens all those that heap up riches by wicked ways: and daily experience shows, that ill-gotten goods are not long enjoyed, and do commonly bring upon the unjust, and their families, all kinds of miseries.

CHAPTER III.

THIS hymn of *Habakkuk* celebrates in lofty expressions the majesty of God, which had formerly appeared, when he published the law on mount *Sinai*, and in the wonders he wrought for the *Jews*, in subduing the kings and people of the land of *Canaan*, and of the countries round about, and settling the children of *Israel* in that country. The design of this hymn was to comfort the *Jews*, and give them full assurance that God would not forsake them, but would again

display his power in delivering them from the oppression of the *Chaldeans*.

Reflections.

THE use we are to make of this hymn is, I. To learn from hence to remember the mercies of God, to meditate upon them continually, and chiefly to reflect on the wonders he has wrought for us in redeeming us by *Jesus Christ* our Lord, since those are infinitely greater than what *Habakkuk* celebrates in this chapter. II. The consideration of the effects of the power and love of God towards us, should inflame our hearts with love and gratitude; and above all should fill us with firm confidence in him, even in the greatest adversities. God has in all ages given evident proofs of his power and justice; and since his love to his church, and to his children is always the same, it is impossible he should ever forsake those who are his, and who hope in him.

The End of the Book of the Prophet Habakkuk.

THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET

ZEPHANIAH.

ARGUMENT.

Zephaniah was sent to the Jews of Judah, under the reign of Josiah, and some time before their destruction, to exhort them to renounce their idolatry and other sins, and be converted; and to threaten them, that if they persevered in their impenitence, they should certainly be destroyed by the Chaldeans.

CHAPTER I.

I. *Zephaniah* declares that the wrath of God was shortly to fall upon *Jerusalem* and its inhabitants, upon the royal family, and upon the whole kingdom of *Judah*, because the *Jews* had provoked the Lord by their crimes, particularly by the worship of false gods, and by their impenitence. II. He describes the horror of that desolation, and says, that neither their riches nor strength should deliver them.

Reflections after reading the Chapter.

I. GOD, in his great goodness to the *Jews*, raised up *Zephaniah*, under the reign of *Josiah*, at a time when every thing was in confusion, and the *Jews* were addicted to idolatry, impiety, and the most shameful

crimes. The prophet had orders from God to exhort them to repentance, and to denounce their total destruction; which *Huldah* the prophetess foretold at the same time. Thus God gives men notice and threatens them, before he punishes them, that they may by their repentance prevent his judgments. II. This chapter represents the extreme desolation to which the *Jews* would be reduced; the strict account God would call them to, and the severe and exemplary punishment they would be exposed to for their sins, which was brought to pass afterwards by the *Egyptians* and *Assyrians* invading *Judea*, and at length by the *Chaldeans*, who took and destroyed the city of *Jerusalem*. We may learn from hence, that nothing can resist the Divine power and justice; and that it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, when he punishes. Above all, the description that the prophet gives of the day of the *Jews'* destruction, should remind us of the great day of judgment, and of the terror of the wicked at that time. Lastly, We should reflect on the cause of those miseries which befell the *Jews*. They had forsaken the Lord, and corrupted his worship; and while they remained in this state of rebellion and impiety, they still flattered themselves they were secure from danger; and that God would bring no evil upon them. Thus God punishes the profanation of the Divine service and impenitency, especially in those to whom he has in a particular manner made himself known. But, what is a mark of the utmost degree of obstinacy, and more especially engages God not to spare sinners, is their not dreading his judgments, though they are so exceeding guilty, nor endeavouring to avert them by repentance.

CHAPTER II.

THIS chapter contains two things: I. An exhortation to the *Jews* to confess their sins, and to be converted, before God executed upon them the decrees of his wrath. II. A prophecy, signifying, that God

would save a remnant of that people; that he would cause the *Jews* to dwell again in the land of *Canaan;* and that the neighbouring nations, the *Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites,* and the *Ethiopians,* should be rooted out, and the *Assyrians* too, who were at that time so powerful, and *Nineveh* their capital city.

Reflections.

We are here taught, I. That when God appears provoked, the surest way to prevent the effects of his wrath, is speedily to repent, and turn to him, before he puts his threatenings in execution. II. That the piety, zeal, and uprightness of those that fear God, are sometimes the means of turning away his anger; and that the Lord never fails to remember the righteous, when he punishes the wicked. This is the reflection to be made on these words of *Zephaniah: Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment, seek righteousness, seek meekness: It may be, ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.* III. The prophet foretells, that God would bring the *Jews* back from their captivity, and that the nations which were their enemies should be utterly laid waste. These predictions were not long before they were fulfilled. The king of *Babylon* subdued the several nations here mentioned; in particular, the destruction of the famous city *Nineveh,* and of the *Assyrian* empire, was seen at that time. All these events show, that God is a righteous judge; and that he restrains the malice, pride, and power of nations and kings; that he takes in hand the cause of his church, and preserves it amidst the revolutions that happen in the world, and in spite of the attempts of those who desire to destroy it.

CHAPTER III.

Zephaniah denounces the utmost miseries against *Jerusalem,* because the *Jews* had not hearkened to the voice of the Lord. He complains of the unjust

acts committed by magistrates; of the lies of the false prophets; of the impiety of the priests, and of the obstinacy of the people, who had made a right use neither of the patience of God, nor his corrections, nor of the example of other nations, and particularly of the *Jews* of the ten tribes, who were already destroyed. He threatens them with a speedy desolation upon that account; promising, however, that God would do them good, and give them further reason to rejoice, by bringing them again from strange nations into their own land, and pouring out his blessings upon them.

Reflections.

I. THE prophet here complains, that the city of *Jerusalem* had refused to hear the voice of God, and to receive instruction; that the magistrates, priests, and prophets, were impious, unjust, and profane; and that the whole nation was extremely hardened; to which he adds, that though God was in the midst of them, and daily did all that was necessary to bring them back to him, they were strangers both to shame and repentance. These complaints ought to be seriously considered, as they show us, that God is always just and good; and therefore, that we may not ascribe his judgments, and the evils that befall men, to any other cause than their wickedness, and their resisting the voice of the Lord. Above all, we may learn from this chapter, that the greatest misfortune that can happen to any people, and which most certainly exposes them to the Divine vengeance, is when their spiritual or temporal rulers neglect the duties of their calling, and trample under foot the laws of religion and justice. II. We must take notice, in the next place, that God had caused the *Jews* to see the destruction of several nations, and especially of their brethren the *Israelites*, that they might learn by these examples to fear him: but because they had persevered in their rebellion, the fire of his wrath was

going to consume them. Those who see the examples of Divine justice, and the miseries which befall others, and do not improve by them, aggravate their guilt and punishment, and have reason to expect the severest effects of the Divine vengeance. Lastly, The promises which *Zephaniah* adds to these threatenings, teach us, that as God afflicts men only to chastise and purify them; he removes the afflictions as soon as they return to him. Thus he restored peace to the *Jews*, and recalled them from *Babylon*, when the seventy years of their captivity were accomplished.

The End of the Book of the Prophet Zephaniah.

THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET

HAGGAI.

ARGUMENT.

The three last prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, prophesied after the return of the Jews from Babylon. Haggai was sent to exhort the Jews to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem, and to declare to them that the Messiah would soon come, and that the glory of his kingdom would be very great.

CHAPTER I.

In this chapter the prophet reproaches the *Jews* for being more concerned in building their own houses, than in rebuilding the temple: he tells them, that their negligence and want of zeal was the reason that God had punished them by a dearth; whereupon *Zerubbabel* the governor of *Jerusalem*, and *Joshua* the chief priest, and all the people, set about building the house of God.

Reflections after reading the Chapter.

Haggai's reproof of the *Jews* for neglecting to rebuild the temple, while they took so much pains about their own houses, leads us to consider, that it is a very great fault to be more concerned for our temporal interests, and for the conveniences of this

life, than for the glory of God, and his service. It must next be observed, that as God punished the lukewarmness and negligence of the *Jews*, by not blessing their labours, and by sending them dearth and barrenness, so they who want zeal for the service of God, deprive themselves of his blessing; whereas he blesses those who seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and together with spiritual, grants them also temporal blessings. Lastly, The deference which *Zerubbabel* the governor of *Jerusalem*, and *Joshua* the high priest, and all the people, paid to the remonstrances of *Haggai*, teaches us to receive with submission the Divine exhortations; and that those who are in authority, either in church or state, should employ themselves with courage, and to the utmost of their power, in works of piety, and in promoting the true worship of God.

CHAPTER II.

I. The prophet foretells, that though the temple of the *Jews* then building, was inconsiderable in comparison with that built by *Solomon*, yet that the glory of that second temple should be greater than the glory of the former, and that the blessing of God should spread itself from thence over all nations. II. *Haggai* declares, that the *Jews* and the sacrifices had been reputed unclean before God, and he had sent barrenness among them, whilst they neglected to rebuild his temple, but that for the future he would bless them. Lastly, He foretells that God would destroy many kingdoms, and recompense the zeal of *Zerubbabel*, governor of the *Jews*.

Reflections.

The most important reflection to be made upon this chapter, relates to the prophecy of *Haggai*, which foretells that the glory of the second temple, which was built after the captivity, should be much greater than that of the first temple, which *Solomon*

had built, and which had been burnt by the *Chaldeans.* Here it must be observed, that the temple of *Solomon* was much richer and more magnificent than that built in the time of *Haggai;* but that nevertheless, the glory of the second would be much greater, because the Messiah was to enter into it. This prophecy, the truth and accomplishment of which can be shown no other way, plainly foretells, that the Messiah should come whilst the second temple was standing; and as that temple no longer subsists, we must necessarily confess, that the Messiah is come, and that this Messiah is *Jesus Christ* our Lord. This is one of the clearest and most express prophecies in the Old Testament. Another consideration which this chapter suggests to us, is that the *Jews* were esteemed unclean, and God punished them by scarcity, while they neglected to rebuild the temple. From whence we may learn, that we can have no share in the Divine blessings, when we are careless, and indifferent in what relates to his service. Lastly, It must be remarked, that, according to the predictions of *Haggai,* the *Persian* and *Grecian* monarchies, which opposed the *Jews,* were destroyed, as that of the *Babylonians* had been; that the *Jews* were supported in their own land; that *Zerubbabel,* and his descendants, subsisted in a glorious state for a very long time; and that at length our Lord was born of his posterity. Thus have the predictions of the prophets always been fulfilled, and the promises of God never failed of being put in execution.

The End of the Book of the Prophet Haggai.

THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET ZECHARIAH.

ARGUMENT.

Zechariah was sent at the same time, and upon the same occasion as Haggai, which was to encourage the Jews to rebuild the temple. In this book there are a great many visions and figures, describing what was to happen to the Jews. There are likewise several prophecies relating to Jesus Christ, and particularly to his royal entry into Jerusalem: to the thirty pieces of silver which Judas received to betray him: to the destruction of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles.

CHAPTER I.

In this chapter *Zechariah* does two things: I. He exhorts the *Jews* to repentance, and not to imitate their fathers, who, for despising the remonstrances of the prophets, had been sent into captivity. II. He relates two visions; one of a man riding upon a red horse; the meaning of which was, that God would have compassion upon *Jerusalem;* that he would restore the *Jews*, and watch over them for their good; the other is, the vision of the four horns, and four

carpenters; which signified, that God would defeat the designs and endeavours of the enemies of his people, and would bring down the power of the kingdoms and nations which had set themselves against them.

Reflections after reading the Chapter.

WHAT we are here to consider, is, I. That exhortation to repentance, which God addressed to the *Jews: Return ye to me, and I will return to you.* These words show, that God is ready to pardon, and restore his peace and favour to those who have provoked him by their sins, as soon as they return sincerely to him. II. God declares to the *Jews*, that their fathers refusing to be converted, and to hearken to the voice of the prophets, who exhorted them to turn from their iniquities, was the reason why he had put in execution the threatenings denounced against them by those prophets. This is a warning to us, not to abuse the long-suffering of God, nor despise either his exhortation or threatenings. III. God sent visions and an angel to *Zechariah*, to assure him, that he was moved with compassion at the sad condition of *Jerusalem*; and that he had resolved to raise it from its ruins, and to deliver it from the oppression it laboured under, and to secure it from the plots and attempts of its enemies. These words of the angel are very remarkable, and evidently discover to us that God sees and governs all events, especially what concerns his church; that whatever state it is in, he is its defender, and never leaves it in the hands of those that seek to destroy it.

CHAPTER II.

I. GOD shows *Zechariah*, in a vision, a man holding a measuring line in his hand; which the angel explains, by telling him, that *Jerusalem* should be rebuilt, and inhabited again; and that God would be a wall to it. II. The prophet invites the *Jews* which

were still at *Babylon*, to return to *Jerusalem*; denounces the judgments of God against their enemies; exhorts the *Jews* to rejoice, and foretells that other nations should join with them, and become likewise the people of God.

Reflections.

We see in this chapter, as well as in the whole prophecy of *Zechariah*, very plain proofs of God's love and protection of the *Jewish* nation; as he himself expresses in these words: *I will be a wall of fire round about Jerusalem. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Sion: For lo I come, and will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord.* The truth of these promises appears in the recalling the *Jews* that were captives at *Babylon*, and in the favours which God granted them after their return to *Jerusalem*; but these promises are yet more applicable to the Christian church; which is the true *Sion*, that shall continue for ever, and into which other nations were to be admitted, and become the people of God; he dwelling in the midst of them, as their everlasting protector. These reflections are very proper to fill with confidence all the true members of the church, and confirm them more and more in godliness.

CHAPTER III.

Zechariah sees the high-priest *Joshua* standing before the angel, with *Satan*, that is to say, an adversary standing by him. This adversary represented the people that hated the *Jews*, and hindered them from rebuilding their city and temple. But the angel threatens this adversary with the judgments of God; commands *Joshua* to put on his priestly garments, and promises him, as well as the *Jews*, a particular blessing and protection. This is expressed in this chapter by the vision there set down, and by the stone which had seven eyes: these eyes represent the knowledge of God and his providence, which

ruleth over all. The design of all this was to show, that God would preserve *Jerusalem* and the temple, in spite of the opposition of their enemies.

Reflections.

THIS chapter presents us with these three observations: I. That as the enemies of the *Jews* formerly with all their might opposed the building of the temple, and restoring the divine service; so those who labour to promote the glory of God, almost always meet with opposition, but ought by no means to be discouraged by it. II. The angel threatens the adversary of the *Jews*, that God would restrain his malice, and defeat his attempts; that the high-priest *Joshua* should execute his office in the temple; and that divine service should be there performed as before. These words of the angel clearly prove, that God was the protector of *Jerusalem*, and of those who had the divine worship at heart; and assure us, that he will always confound the enemies of true religion, and of his church, and will be the defender and support of all such as serve him faithfully. III. We must here remember the remark which St. *Peter* and St. *Jude* made upon these words of the angel to the adversary, who represented the enemies of the *Jews: The Lord rebuke thee;* upon which words these apostles observe, that since the angels themselves do not pronounce the sentence of condemnation against such as are exalted in dignity, but refer them to the judgment of God; it is never lawful to revile and speak evil of the higher powers, but that we ought always to speak of them with meekness and respect.

CHAPTER IV.

IN this chapter *Zechariah* relates the vision of the golden candlestick and the two olive trees; which vision implied, that *Jerusalem* and the temple should be restored by the Divine assistance, and by the care of *Joshua*, the high priest, and of *Zerubbabel* the

governor; who are here called the two olive trees, and the two sons of oil, that is, the two anointed of the Lord.

Reflections.

THE vision in this chapter teaches us, that as God formerly protected *Zerubbabel* and *Joshua*, the two chief rulers of the *Jews*, at a time when they met with great opposition; so he blesses and supports all his faithful servants; and that, in particular, he will defend and bless those, who, being in the magistracy, or in the holy ministry, employ themselves zealously for his glory, and for the edification of his church.

CHAPTER V.

THE fifth chapter contains two visions; the first is, the vision of the flying roll, or book, wherein were contained the curses of God's law, denounced against thieves and perjured persons; which vision represents the Divine vengeance pursuing the hypocritical and ungodly *Jews*. The time in which *Zechariah* prophesied, gives room to suppose, that these threatenings regard those who made use of fraud and sacrilege with respect to what had been dedicated to the rebuilding the temple, and restoring the divine service. This appears from the reproaches of the prophet *Malachi*, who prophesied at that time. The second vision is that of the ephah, which was a measure used to measure corn with; and the sense of the vision seems to be, that the *Jews* having filled up the measure of their iniquities, were carried away captives, and that by this means their sin had been, as it were, carried away to *Babylon*.

Reflections.

THE first of *Zechariah's* visions here set down, engages us to consider, that the curse of God pursues the unjust, perjured persons, and more particularly ungodly, sacrilegious, and hypocritical men, who despise religion, and profane the service of God.

This curse cleaves to their persons, their goods, and even to their posterity; God punishes them by this means, making them serve as an example of his just vengeance. In the second vision we may remark, that as the *Jews* were carried captives to *Babylon* for the punishment of their sins, in such a manner, however, that after they had remained a long time in that country, for their punishment, God brought them from thence; so likewise God punishes and chastises men, when they have filled up the measure of their iniquities; but he does it with an intent to recover them, that they may become afterwards objects of his love.

CHAPTER VI.

I. An angel shows *Zechariah* four chariots, which were going to the several parts of the world. This emblem seems to denote that there happened, and would happen, great changes in the empires of the world, and particularly in the four monarchies, which *Daniel* and the other prophets had spoken of; and that amidst all these changes, Providence would preserve the *Jews*, and execute judgments on their enemies. II. The angel orders the prophet to receive the gold and silver which some considerable persons would give him, and make therewith crowns for *Joshua*, the high priest, and to put them into the temple for a memorial that *Joshua* should exercise the priest's office, and that the temple and the divine service should continue.

Reflections.

Though the visions here related are attended with some obscurity, yet this we see in general, that there had happened, and were still to happen, great revolutions in the world; and particularly in the states and kingdoms that had any relation to the people of God; but that the Lord would so over-rule all these events that the kings and people should do nothing

but what God had determined, and that the *Jews* should always experience his love and protection. The second part of this chapter shows more particularly, that God would reward in a glorious manner the zeal of *Joshua*, the high priest, and would keep up his worship at *Jerusalem*. From whence we may conclude, that if God formerly protected the *Jews* and their rulers in troublesome times, and punished the princes and kingdoms which had made war against them, he will never suffer all the powers of the world or hell to prevail against his church; and that *Jesus Christ*, the great high priest and king of his church, will always support it, and destroy whatever opposes his kingdom.

CHAPTERS VII. VIII.

THESE two chapters treat of the same subject, and should therefore be read together. The *Jews* having inquired of the priests, whether they should continue to keep the fasts, as they had done during the seventy years of the captivity, *Zechariah*, by way of reply, does these four things; I. He asks them, whether they had fasted truly, and for God's sake? II. He adds, that God had fulfilled the threatenings of his prophets; and because their fathers had not lived righteously, he had dispersed them over all the world. III. He tells them that the jealousy of the Lord, and the love he bore his people, would induce him to call them back, and to bless them, provided that, for the future, they would set themselves to do that which was right. IV. The prophet directly answers their question, and declares, that the four fasts, which had till then been kept in memory of the siege of *Jerusalem*, the taking of that city, the destruction of the temple, and the murder of *Gedaliah*, should be changed into days of joy, and that even several nations should join themselves with them to worship the true God.

Reflections.

I. THESE two chapters teach us, that fasting and prayer cannot please God, unless they be attended with reformation, and that without this disposition, he has no regard to the worship we pay him. II. The example of the *Jews*, who were dispersed among the nations for not walking uprightly, and for despising the threats and remonstrances of the prophets, shows us, that God never threatens in vain, and that he punishes severely the contempt of his word, and obstinately persisting in sin. III. In the promises made by *Zechariah* to the *Jews*, and the change made in their fasting days, we see that God loves his church, and that after he has chastised it, his power brings peace, and causes joy to succeed afflictions. IV. We should carefully attend to what God by his prophet says to the *Jews: These are the things that ye shall do: Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates; and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour, and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord.* These noble expressions teach us, that the surest, and indeed the only way to render ourselves acceptable to God, is to live in innocence, justice, charity, and holiness. Lastly, We have in the last words of the eighth chapter a prophecy, that several nations would one day join with the *Jews* in worshipping the true God; which came to pass first, when after the captivity a great number of idolaters embraced the *Jewish* religion, and afterwards, when the heathen were converted to the Christian religion.

CHAPTER IX.

I. THE prophet foretells, that the *Syrians*, the *Tyrians*, the *Sidonians*, the *Philistines*, and the other enemies of his people, should be destroyed. II. He comforts *Jerusalem* with the promise of the coming

of her king; he proclaims deliverance to the captive *Jews*, and every blessing.

Reflections.

I. God executed his threatenings against the nations mentioned in this chapter, by means of *Alexander* the Great, who subdued them, as well as by the *Jews* who conquered several cities in *Syria*, *Edom*, and the country of the *Philistines*, as we learn from *Josephus*, and the history of the *Maccabees;* and who gained great advantages over *Antiochus Epiphanes*, king of *Syria*. II. *Zechariah* foretells, likewise, that among those nations, God would bring many persons to the knowledge of himself; which came to pass, when several heathens in those countries embraced the *Jewish* religion. III. We have here an express prophecy, foretelling, that God would send to *Jerusalem* a king and mighty deliverer; that this king should appear in a mean and abject condition; that he should come riding upon an ass; but that nevertheless, he should give signal proofs of his infinite power. This prophecy was accomplished, when *Jesus Christ* made his royal entry into *Jerusalem*, six days before his death, riding upon an ass, and followed by a great multitude of people; and when after his death and resurrection, he established his kingdom throughout the world. This is one of the characters by which we discover that *Jesus Christ* is the Messiah promised by the prophets; and these words of *Zechariah, Rejoice, O daughter of Zion; behold thy king cometh unto thee;* engage us to share in that joy, which the coming of the Redeemer was to occasion to the church, and to submit to him as our great and good king, who reigns over us only to make us happy.

CHAPTER X.

Zechariah, after he had promised the *Jews*, at the end of the former chapter, that God would send them plenty, and blessings of every kind, exhorts them to

apply to God, and not to idols, to obtain them, as they had done before, when they were seduced by their rulers and by false prophets, which had provoked God's wrath against them. He renews his promises that God, who was the support of the *Jews*, would gather them again from the countries where several of them were still dispersed, and that he would completely humble the power and pride of the *Assyrians*, *Egyptians*, and the other enemies of his people.

Reflections.

THIS chapter engages us to consider, I. That since God is the author of all blessings, temporal as well as spiritual, from him alone we ought to expect them; and that in order to obtain them, we must devoutly ask, and with fidelity serve him. II. That all the predictions of *Zechariah*, and the other prophets, concerning the return of the *Jews*, and the destruction of the nations that made war against them, were fulfilled; and therefore we have no reason to doubt but those holy men were inspired by God, and that the doctrine contained in their writings should be received as the word of God himself.

CHAPTER XI.

THIS chapter describes in general the judgments of God on the people of *Israel*. These he represents, by saying that he had in his hand two staves, that is, shepherds' crooks; that one of them was called beauty, which denoted the covenant that the *Jews* had made with God: and the other was called bands, which implied the union of the two people of *Israel* and *Judah*. He says, that these two staves were broken, to signify that God would no longer feed or govern the *Jews*, but that he would scatter them over all the world. The prophet adds, that three shepherds, or three leaders, were cut off in one month; the meaning of which may be, that the principal orders of the *Jewish* leaders should be abolished in a

short time. We have here also the prophecy of our Saviour's being betrayed for thirty pieces of silver.

Reflections.

On this chapter let us make these two reflections: I. That as the covenant God had made with the *Jews*, did not hinder him from casting them off and forsaking them, because they had broken it; so our covenant with God will not screen us from his wrath, if we break it, and prove unfaithful. II. The other reflection relates to these words: *They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver; and the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter.* The evangelists observe, that this prophecy was fulfilled when *Judas* received of the *Jews* thirty pieces of silver to betray our Lord, and when that money which *Judas* cast into the temple was applied by the priests in the purchase of the potter's field. This prediction shows, that all which befell *Jesus Christ* was so directed by Providence, and had been long before signified by the prophets, that by these several characters he might be known to be the Messiah.

CHAPTER XII.

This chapter contains promises in behalf of *Jerusalem;* the prophet likewise foretells, that the *Jews* should be assaulted, but that God would confound their enemies.

Reflections.

I. The truth of the promises here made to the *Jews*, appeared in the divine protection of that people after their return from the captivity; and chiefly, in the glorious deliverance which God vouchsafed them by the *Maccabees.* II. We must remember that these words, *They shall look upon me, whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him,* relate to our Lord *Jesus Christ.* St. *John* quotes them, to represent the greatness of the crime the *Jews* had committed in crucifying him; the severity

of the punishments they drew upon themselves by that means; and the terror that shall fall upon the wicked, when our Lord shall come at the last day to judge the world.

CHAPTER XIII.

I. THE prophet foretells that there should be a spring and fountain open for the *Jews*, that idolatry should be banished from the midst of them, and that false prophets should no more be suffered amongst them, but should be rejected even by their nearest relations. II. He foretells that God would smite the shepherd, and that the sheep of the flock should be scattered; that two parts of the people should be cut off, but that a third should be preserved and dedicated to the service of God.

Reflections.

WHAT we read in this chapter relates to the state the *Jews* were to be in after their return from the captivity. *Zechariah* says, that God would pour upon them his grace; that he would cleanse them from their sins; that they would not any more fall into idolatry, nor hearken to false prophets, persuading them to worship idols; that, however, that people, and their rulers, should be smitten, and exposed to great calamities; but that there should be in those times a great number of *Jews*, who being purified by affliction, would serve God faithfully and zealously. All these things befell the *Jews* between their return from *Babylon*, and the coming of *Jesus Christ;* and particularly at the time of the persecution of *Antiochus*. In a more perfect sense, this prophecy sets before us the graces which God has conferred on his church under the Gospel, washing away the sins of men by the blood of his Son, and recovering them from idolatry and corruption, that they might become the people of God, and serve him with purity.

CHAPTER XIV.

Zechariah foretells, that *Jerusalem* should be attacked by powerful enemies; but that God would save a remnant of his people, and exalt them to great glory; that the grace of God should from *Jerusalem* spread over other nations; that strange nations should worship God, and submit to his government; and that the enemies of the church, and those who refused to give glory to God, should be overwhelmed with his judgments.

Reflections.

We are to seek for the accomplishment of the promises God here makes in favour of *Jerusalem*, and his people; first, in the state of the *Jews* after their return from *Babylon*, in their wars with their enemies, and in the signal deliverances God granted them upon several occasions, especially when they were persecuted by *Antiochus*. These advantages raised that nation to very great glory, and engaged those *Jews* who were dispersed in *Egypt*, and other countries, to come to *Jerusalem* to worship the God of their fathers, and attend at the solemn fasts. But it is to be considered, that the *Jews* did not long continue in that happy condition, not long enough to answer to the glorious promises God had made them: that *Jerusalem* was afterwards entirely destroyed; and that while it did subsist, it could not be said that God reigned, as *Zechariah* here foretells. Wherefore this prophecy ought to be understood in a spiritual and more perfect sense, as it relates to the Christian church, of which *Jesus Christ* is the king and protector; and in which all nations are gathered together to worship God in spirit and in truth.

The End of the Book of the Prophet Zechariah.

THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET

MALACHI.

ARGUMENT.

Malachi, the last of the prophets, does two things in his prophecy. I. *He exhorts the Jews to reform the disorders that were committed among them, especially in the divine service, and to be converted.* II. *He foretells the establishment of the Gospel worship; the coming of John the Baptist, and of Jesus Christ; and the last ruin of the Jews.*

CHAPTER I.

I. In this chapter God reproaches the *Jews,* that though he had loved and chosen them for his people, before the posterity of *Esau,* yet they had been ungrateful for his favours. II. He reproves the priests and the people for offering to him unclean things, and beasts that had blemishes, which was against the law; and he foretells, that the time drew near when men should offer everywhere to God a pure service, and sacrifices that should be acceptable to him.

Reflections after reading the Chapter.

I. GOD, to convince the *Jews* that he had loved them in a very particular manner, tells them at the beginning of this prophecy, that he had loved *Jacob*, and hated *Esau;* the meaning of which is, that he had chosen *Jacob* preferably to *Esau* his brother, to be admitted into covenant with him; and that he had not restored the *Edomites*, and descendants of *Esau*, after their destruction, as he had restored the *Jews*, the posterity of *Jacob*, by bringing them again to *Jerusalem*. St. *Paul* quotes this passage of *Malachi*, in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the *Romans*, to show, that God may choose whom he pleases, and grant them extraordinary favours, which he vouchsafes not to others; and that if we are so happy as to be the people of God, we owe it wholly to his goodness, and to the free and gracious choice he has been pleased to make of us. II. We here see that the *Jews*, notwithstanding the love which God had expressed towards them, did not honour him as they ought. This God complains of, when he says, *A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master; if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and I if be a master, where is my fear?* These words teach us, that they who return the divine love only with disobedience, are guilty of foul ingratitude; and that it is in vain to call God our Father and our Lord, if we do not render him the fear and honour which are due to him. III. Those who are called to the holy ministry, ought to discharge it in such a manner, that God may not have occasion to reproach them, as he did the *Jewish* priests, with dishonouring his name, and rendering his service contemptible. IV. The prophet complains, that the *Jews*, out of a principle of covetousness, brought into the temple unsuitable offerings, and presented only things of the smallest value; which God looked upon as sacrilege and impiety. This should make us shun covetousness, and excite us to act sincerely, and after the most perfect

manner, in all things that concern the glory of God and his service. Lastly, *Malachi* foretells, that the name of God should be great among all nations, and that in all places incense and pure oblations should be offered to his name. This prophecy signified that the name of God would be made known throughout the world, by the preaching of the Gospel; and it is to be understood of the worship that would be paid among all nations, after the manifestation of the Messiah. This engages us to discharge these just duties, by offering always to God such spiritual sacrifices as he will accept through *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

CHAPTER II.

This chapter consists of two parts: I. God reproves the negligence and impiety of the priests, who, instead of having at heart the glory of God, and faithfully instructing the *Jews*, as their function obliged them, dishonoured their ministry, rendered the divine service contemptible, and caused the people to sin; for which he threatens them with his curses. II. God complains, that the *Jews* had married idolatrous women, contrary to the law; and that they violated the sacred laws of marriage, by divorces, and by unlawful marriages.

Reflections.

The first part of this chapter directly relates to the ministers of religion, teaching them that they are appointed to procure the glory of God, to be the guides of the people, and to instruct them faithfully, both by their doctrine and example; that when they are wanting in their duty, religion is despised, divine service is profaned, the people corrupted, and they themselves fall into contempt, and become the objects of the curse of God. The pastors and governors of the church ought to have these reflections continually before their eyes. The second part of this chapter contains very important directions about marriage. Here we see that God is offended when the sacred

laws of marriage are broken, either by divorces, or by polygamy, or in any other manner whatever, as well as when we marry persons guilty of idolatry. *Malachi* shows, that all these disorders are contrary to the first institution of marriage, since God created but one man and one woman at the beginning; and this point *Jesus Christ* settles still more plainly in the Gospel, where he proves, by the first institution made by God after the creation, that marriage is a holy state, and an indissoluble bond, which equally binds the wife and the husband. Therefore this state ought to be respected, and preserved in its purity among Christians.

CHAPTER III.

HERE are three things to be observed: I. The prophet foretells, that God would soon send *John* the Baptist, and that then the Messiah should come to purify his church, by establishing the true service of God, and by punishing the wicked. II. He severely rebukes the impiety of the *Jews*, and the sacrilege they committed in their tithes and offerings. III. He refutes the blasphemies of those profane persons, who gave out that men serve God in vain: and he says, that God never fails to reward those that fear him, and to distinguish them from the ungodly.

Reflections.

I. THIS prophecy expressly shows, that God was shortly to send a prophet, who is here called the Angel, or Messenger of the Lord; after which the Lord, whom the *Jews* expected, should enter into his temple. Our Lord *Jesus Christ* explains this prophecy in the eleventh chapter of St. *Matthew*, and declares, that *John* Baptist is that messenger who was to come. It is evident this prediction has been accomplished, since it foretold, that the Messiah should come while the temple at *Jerusalem* was standing; for that temple being destroyed, there is no

ambiguity in this prophecy, and we cannot doubt but that *Jesus* is the Messiah promised to the *Jews*. II. This prophecy shows, that the design of the coming of *Jesus Christ* was to sanctify his church, and to make believers so many priests and Levites; that is, persons dedicated to the service of God. This is a powerful motive to Christians to behave agreeably to their holy calling, by devoting themselves to God, and by the purity of their lives. III. *Malachi's* reproach of the *Jews* for their sins, and particularly for their sacrilege, and their contempt of the divine service, is an argument to prove, that God would have men respect every thing that belongs to religion, and in particular, that it is a great sin to apply to any other purpose things that are devoted to holy uses. IV. Let us learn likewise from hence, to detest profane speeches and sentiments; and, above all, to abhor the impiety of those who affirm, that it is in vain to fear God and to keep his commandments. The Lord here very expressly declares, that he knows those that fear him and reverence his name; that he will remember them and their pious behaviour, and will always make a just difference between the righteous and the wicked.

CHAPTER IV.

Malachi foretells the coming of the day of God's vengeance, and the destruction of the ungodly, under the emblem of fire, which consumes all things; and says it would be preceded by the coming of the Messiah, whom he calls the Sun of Righteousness, and by the coming of *John* Baptist, to whom he gives the name of *Elijah*, and whose office and ministry he describes.

Reflections.

THIS last chapter of *Malachi* takes notice of three considerable events. The first is the vengeance which God purposed to exercise against the ungodly. This

prophecy expresses what befell the unbelieving *Jews* soon after the coming of *Jesus Christ*, when they were destroyed with their city and temple. The second is, the manifestation of the Messiah, who is here called the Sun of Righteousness, with healing on his wings. The third is the coming of *John* Baptist, to whom *Malachi* gives the name of *Elijah* the prophet, because he was to resemble *Elijah* in his manner of living, in his zeal, and in the nature of his office. We find in the Gospel, that this is the true sense of this prophecy, our Lord having expressly told us, that *John* Baptist was the *Elijah* that was to come. These several predictions are so many proofs which confirm the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, the truth of the Christian religion, the certainty of the promises and threatenings of the Gospel, and the necessity of practising all that is therein commanded. This is also the design of all the prophecies, and of all the Books of the Old Testament, and the use to which they ought to be applied.

The End of the Canonical Books of the Old Testament.

END OF VOL. II.

THEOLOGY LIBRARY
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
CALIFORNIA
B52
41873
A11555

BS475 .0813 / vol 2
Osterwald, Jean Frederic, 1663-1747.
The arguments of the books and chapters

BS
475
0813
Lib. has
v. 2

Osterwald, Jean Frédéric, 1663-17
The arguments of the books and
of the Old and New Testament; with
observations. Written originally
by the Rev. Mr. Osterwald. Transl
Chamberlayne. London, Printed for
for Promoting Christian Knowledge
3v. 19cm.

1. Bible--Introductions. I. Tit
Chamberlayne, John, 1666-1723, tr.

A11555

A11555